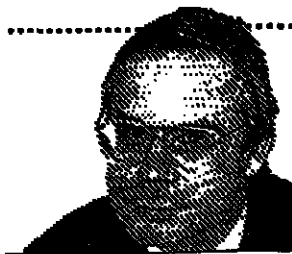


Sketch

In the event of a pseudo-event...



Simon Hoggart

THE late Harold Macmillan, when asked what anxieties kept him awake at night, murmured: "Events, dear boy, events." But the curious thing about the eight months of Labour government is that there haven't been any events. Not to speak of. No stock market crashes — yet, no damaging strikes, no wars, no riots. All their crises have been of their own making.

As Daniel Boorstin pointed out in *The Image*, the seminal work on spin doctors: "A pseudo-event comes about because someone has planned it, planted or incited it. Typically, it is not a train wreck or an earthquake, but an interview."

Such as, for example, the interviews given by "friends" of Gordon Brown to my old colleague Paul Routledge for his new biography of the Chancellor. These have revealed the extent of Mr Brown's ambition, and his belief that he had been betrayed by his friend Tony Blair. You can't blame the Hong Kong stock exchange or the miners' union for that.

Nor can events be blamed for the debacle over tobacco sponsorship, or Geoffrey Robinson's tax arrangements, or the dispute about single mothers' benefits or, come to that, the Foreign Secretary's private life.

In a few months, the Government has managed to run out of feet in which to shoot itself. The spin doctors have done what they can to turn these various crises into pseudo-events, by deflecting attention, or trying to change perceptions (there is, for example, a man whose job it is to phone journalists to tell them what a splendid job the Foreign Secretary has been doing in the House).

If this is what happens when there are no genuine events, one wonders what will

occur when things do start happening. How will they handle the recession we are promised? Or the start of European Monetary Union? Or reform of the Welfare State when the going really gets tough?

Little at Prime Minister's Question Time offered much encouragement. Messrs Blair and Brown sat on the bench together yesterday, chatting amiably as if, for all the world, they hadn't both stabbed each other ruthlessly in the front.

Mr Hague, as part of an unnecessary and bad-tempered squabble about benefits, observed that Frank Field and his nominal boss, Harriet Harman, were at odds over means testing: she's for it, he's against it.

"It's as good a well-kept secret as a grudge borne by the Chancellor!" he said, to cheerful Tory assent. He then quoted a curious DSS explanation for something Mr Harman had said: "It's a spurious figure, but it's one she uses to make her point. Like a lot of figures we give, it doesn't represent real life."

Mr Hague used this to make the point that much of what the Government says fails to represent real life. He's right: in the world of the pseudo-event, reality is only a nuisance and a distraction.

Some of the rougher Tories raised the topic of Guyanese Regan, Robin Cook's partner. John Bercow told the Prime Minister that since his election, he had spent more time in the Seychelles than in the Commons, going on to ask whether Mr Blair would now publish the rules for travel at the public expense by ministerial partners.

Mr Blair didn't reply. Instead he claimed that he had been reflecting on Mr Bercow and concluded that he resembled David Shaw, a loud-mouthed robbard who used to be Tory MP for Dover. "His hallmark was to be nasty and ineffectual in equal measures" — a curious analogy, since none of the arriving Blair troops could have had the faintest idea of who Mr Shaw used to be.

As we filed out of the chamber, colleagues and I reflected that in half an hour, Mr Blair had evaded almost every other question. Though he did say bluntly and openly that he had no plans to visit Cornwall.

Review

Lost in dreams of England

Michael Billington

Never Land
Royal Court, Theatre Upstairs

LOSING my way some years ago in a picturesque Venetian backwater, I asked a friendly local for help. "You from London?" he inquired. When I told him that I was, his eyes lit up and he uttered, with pure rhapsodic joy, a cry of "Ah, the magic of Golders Green!"

That memory came back to me as I was watching Phyllis Nagy's *Never Land*, jointly presented by The Foundry and the Royal Court, for one of Nagy's many themes in this rich, dense, if somewhat over-written, play is that we constantly fantasise about other countries. Indeed her hero, Henri Joubert, living with his wife and daughter in the south of France, not only dreams of becoming a Bristol bookseller and imagines that the wine he drinks with his perfume factory boss is tea, but forces his family and guests to act out classic scenes from *Pawfoot Towers*.

In part, Nagy is dealing with the sustaining nature of myths. Henri, a nervous, panic-stricken figure who seems menace all around him, displaces his daily fears by creating a romantic vision of England. And nothing in the play is crueler — or more plausible — than the scene in which the wife of the bookseller-owner who has offered Henri a job shatters his dream with a gushing, toothy innocence.

But Nagy is clearly writing about much more than cross-channel misunderstanding. At one point, Henri and his

perfumery boss argue about destiny and will and Nagy clearly implies that her hero is a victim of cruel, strangulating fate. I also see the play as a testament to the power of buried, unspoken love in that, although Henri and his bitter, boozy wife are at constant loggerheads, they are in fact united by a strange, subterranean passion.

Nagy certainly doesn't lack for ideas. The problem is that, in pursuing all of them and in giving virtually every character his or her own interior monologue, she sometimes allows her three-act, three-hour play to meander. But I can forgive her play its discursiveness and its feeling for character: in particular, the crazily anglophile Henri is a genuinely rich creation.

In short, Nagy creates a genuine world on stage, one that is well realised in Steven Pimlett's production and Mark Thompson's design, in which the rain beats down incessantly in this supposedly idyllic pocket of southern France. The performances also are in tune with the writing. Pip Donaghy conveys both the inner torment and dreaming ineffectuality of the helpless Henri. Sheila Gish as his alcoholic wife offers a fascinating picture of slightly decaying voluptuousness. And Suzanne Burden as the bookseller's wife has a fake upper-class smiling gushiness that is as instantly recognisable as the wine-bibbing, sensual contentment of David Killick as Henri's French boss. This may not be a flawless play but it is a quietly engrossing one.

This review appeared in some editions yesterday

Open-air opera in Oxfordshire village ruled not a nuisance to neighbours

Sarah Bosley

TO THE chagrin of his neighbours, the man who brought opera to an English village was yesterday cleared by magistrates of noise nuisance.

The villagers of South End in Oxfordshire had queued to give evidence against Leonard Ingrams, alleging his month-long summer opera

festival at Garsington Manor was so loud that it drowned out their television sets.

But Mr Ingrams survived a second prosecution brought by environmental health officials of South Oxfordshire district council. Magistrates decided there was insufficient proof that the music was loud enough to disturb the neighbourhood unreasonably, and ordered the council to pay costs.

Commission sets tough terms for exports to EU countries to resume as doubts remain over BSE

Ban on British beef eased

Stephen Bates
in Strasbourg

BRITAIN'S hopes of securing a partial lifting of the beef export ban rose last night as the European Commission voted in favour of allowing some exports to resume under strict conditions.

But behind-the-scenes wrangles in Brussels and Strasbourg made it clear that the Government still faces an uphill battle to persuade sceptical EU partners that British beef is safe.

The 20 commissioners, meeting in Strasbourg, agreed that exports of beef from cattle in so-called certified herds, which have computerised records for each animal and whose cattle have not been in contact with cows infected with BSE for at least eight years, could be considered safe.

Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Secretary, welcomed the announcement as a big boost for farmers. "This marks a significant step forward in regaining access to international markets... (we) will be doing all we can to persuade member states

that because British beef is safe, there is no risk to public health in letting this scheme go ahead. British beef is subject to the most rigorous safeguards."

In practice any relaxation will apply only to animals from herds in Northern Ireland, where computerised records have been in place longer than the rest of the UK.

The move, if approved by a two-thirds majority at the EU's standing committee of chief veterinary officers, would be the first easing of the worldwide export ban. Agriculture ministers from the 15 governments will prob-

ably have to vote on the proposal next month.

The ban was imposed 22 months ago after the announcement that there might be a link between BSE in cattle and the incurable CJD disease in humans.

But even if the relaxation is agreed, only meat from cattle aged between six and 30 months could be exported. Some commission officials, especially from Germany, still appear determined to prevent the ban being lifted and any relaxation still has to gain the approval of a large majority of the 15 member states. So far only Ireland, the

Netherlands and, possibly, Denmark appear to be on Britain's side.

Germany has consistently opposed any relaxation of the export ban or Britain's attempts to impose restrictions on beef imports.

Senior German officials in the commission have tried strenuously to convince Emma Bonino, consumer affairs-commissioner, to oppose lifting the ban. One non-German official said: "The Germans and Austrians are hopeless cases. They have painted themselves into a corner."

But Franz Fischler, the Austrian agriculture commis-

sioner who has supported a relaxation of the ban, said last night: "I think we shall now have to try to convince a big majority of member states to accept this proposal because it is on the very safe side."

"I have had a lot of discussions in recent months in Great Britain and I understand the problems and also how damaged farmers have been by the BSE disaster. But I think there is a clear hope now and if we are successful with this first step other steps will follow."

Flood agency launched, page 4

RUC officer shot by undercover woman soldier

John Mullan
Ireland Correspondent

A POLICE officer was last night fighting for his life after being shot in the chest by an undercover woman soldier when a surveillance operation in Belfast went disastrously wrong.

The soldier, believed to be young and relatively inexperienced, was said to be "traumatised". Attempted murder charges could be considered. The policeman is critically ill, but stable. Neither he nor the soldier has been named.

Bill Stewart, RUC assistant chief constable, said: "Probably no one can appreciate the feelings of both police and military colleagues." He promised procedures would be tightened to prevent a repeat.

The soldier, in plain clothes and in an unmarked car, was believed to be in the Ardoyne, a republican area of north Belfast, where security patrols have been stepped up amid fears of further terrorist attacks. The RUC spotted her driving erratically, and are believed to have suspected she was a joyrider.

The two uniformed officers in the RUC car, unmarked but equipped with lights and sirens, followed the soldier, who is thought to be with army intelligence. She apparently thought that they were terrorists, and suddenly accelerated in an effort to escape. The cars sped down the Crumlin Road at up to 90mph.

The soldier lost control as she reached Carlisle Circus, close to the city centre. She crashed into a roundabout, and was quickly approached by one of the policemen. She shot at him twice through the windscreen.

It was dark and the officer may not have been wearing full uniform. "She acted in panic," said one source. "It was the nightmare scenario for officers engaged in undercover work."

The RUC said it had procedures designed to prevent separate security operations stumbling into each other.

The army was refusing to comment, and the RUC was releasing only sketchy details. It is unknown if the police car had switched on its blue spotlights or its siren. Two RUC vehicles joined the



Security forces at Carlisle Circus in north Belfast after the shooting of an RUC man by a soldier who had crashed her car there. PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN LEWIS

chase. One eyewitness, who contacted the BBC immediately after the incident, said the RUC had returned fire on the soldier's car. The RUC denied that, saying only two shots were fired, both by the soldier.

The area was cordoned off with no photographers able to get close to the scene. The soldier's car was quickly

removed. Although unhurt, the soldier was said to be in no condition to be questioned. She is thought to have been a member of 14 Intelligence, a unit dedicated to undercover work.

The unit generally gathers information on republicans, although it has been used against loyalists too.

The RUC is in control of

such operations, and the army should inform it of all its plans. The RUC's anti-terrorist branch, E4A, and Special Branch would generally be in-

formed, and notice of any operations would be passed to RUC patrols in the area.

North Belfast is currently a highly sensitive area. Almost

one-fifth of the 3,200 deaths in the Troubles have occurred in the district.

6,000 at funeral, page 4

Venables: the charges

Stuart Miller

THE 50-page statement presented to the court details 19 specific allegations of serious misconduct by Venables in relation to his involvement with four companies: Scribes West, a club in Kensington, west London; Edennotte plc, a trading company which was supposed to be a joint venture with Tottenham Hotspur plc; and Tottenham Hotspur Football and Athletic company.

It includes allegations that Venables allowed his long-standing business manager, Eddie Ashby, to become involved in the management of all four companies, despite being an undischarged bankrupt.

□ Scribes failed to keep separate records of Venables' ex-

penditure on himself and his guests at the club, and adjusting stock figures the company's turnover was overstated. Admitted.

□ Between May and September 1991, Scribes paid sums totalling £32,822 to Glenhope Management Ltd, a company controlled by Venables, even though the club was in grave financial difficulties and unable to pay its debts. Neither Glenhope nor Venables was entitled to the money. Admitted.

□ Venables falsely claimed that he could raise £750,000 from his own resources to help Edennotte buy a £3 million controlling stake in Tottenham Hotspur. Admitted.

□ Venables dishonestly arranged £1 million in loans for Edennotte by entering what he knew were sham sale and lea-

seback arrangements with a finance company, Landhurst Leasing. Not disputed.

□ He allowed an improper payment of £10,000 to a director of Landhurst to substitute the original agreement for one more favourable to Edennotte. Not disputed.

□ Edennotte continued trading while Venables knew it was insolvent. When the company went into liquidation, it had a net deficiency to creditors of more than £1 million. Admitted.

□ Edennotte made uncommercial and unrecoverable loans against its best interests to other companies associated with Venables. Admitted.

□ Landhurst was allowed free use of box 44 at Spurs' ground for the 1991/92 season, depriving the club of £14,500 in rent. Admitted.

Boardroom ban on former England coach

continued from page 1

controlling interest in the club. But yesterday, confusion surrounded the deal after he insisted he had not given up the shares.

The DTI ban prevents him from being a director of a limited company but does not prohibit share ownership.

Last August his company, Venmore, was paid £200,000 as a "one-off performance bonus" by Portsmouth after the sale of Lee Bradbury to Manchester City for £3 million. He insisted the timing was coincidental — and the money was owed to him for work done for the club.

The seven-year ban, the lat-

est in a long line of business setbacks for Mr Venables, was in the "middle bracket" of disqualification periods, the court was told. It reflected the gravity of his misconduct while taking into account his admission or non-denial of the allegations. Concern over his business dealings dogged Mr Venables' career as England coach.

The DTI investigation was revealed two days after he was offered the job, and he was forced to step down after the Euro 96 to fight a series of legal battles.

Dates have yet to be set for libel actions he is bringing against the BBC and the Mirror newspaper.



"Vindicated": Kate Hoey MP, one of Venables' critics

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Montmartre's matrons v tacky tourism

'It's not that we object to tourists as such. It's the type of tourist. The kind that does the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and Montmartre in an afternoon. They've turned the village into a supermarket for bad art and worse food, and it had to stop'

Jon Henley takes a ringside seat



The Sacré-Cœur, where many tourists stop for the obligatory photo of the spectacular view across Paris

PHOTOGRAPH MARTIN PARR

Handbags at dawn in Paris battle

IN THE blue corner, the matrons of Montmartre: tailored twinsets, refined accents, demure but determined defenders of what should be the most romantic corner of Paris.

In the red, the souvenir shop owners, restaurateurs and street artists who preside over the tackiest of the capital's tourist traps.

"It's not that we object to tourists as such," said Marie-Claude Rémy, vice-president of the 600-member Association for the Defence of Montmartre, sitting in the antique-filled living room of fellow activist, Danielle Pelissier.

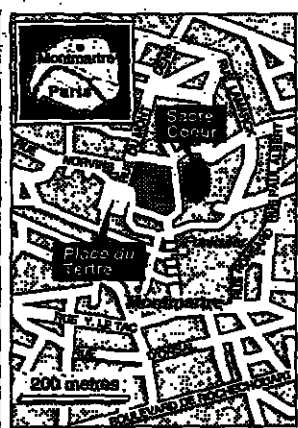
"It's the type of tourist. The kind that does the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and Montmartre in an afternoon. They've turned the village into a supermarket for bad art and worse food, and it had to stop."

Views in the square outside are more forthright. "Bloody women," said Marco, a Sicilian-born portrait painter, homing in on a small group of Japanese. "They want to kill us? If they want peace and quiet, they should go live in the suburbs."

There are two Montmartres. One is the narrow streets, hidden squares and precipitous stone steps of a small medieval village of 36,000 people, perched on the highest hill in Paris. It seduced the likes of Toulouse-Lautrec, Renoir and Picasso.

The other is the obligatory photo of the view from the Sacré-Cœur, the dubious oils and pastels on offer in the Place du Tertre, and the accordion players, hot-dog vendors and postcard stalls. It seduces 6.5 million tourists a year.

Montmartre, which became part of Paris in 1860, has lived through many battles. In 1871, an angry mob led by a radical



schoolteacher, Louise Michel, drove off government troops who tried to remove the village's cannons, launching the short-lived Paris commune. But few have divided the village as bitterly as the battle of the tourist coaches.

Until the matrons of Montmartre delivered a punishing upper-cut that ended the first round, most of the tourists came by coach. On peak summer weekends as many as 1,200 coaches a day crawled up and down the winding streets that climb to the top of Montmartre, the Butte.

"Horrible things," said Ms Pelissier, the association's president. "Shaking our foundations, polluting our creches, wrecking the cobbles. Really, it was insupportable."

What the ladies lack in muscle, they make up for in political clout. In November, the mayor of Paris, Jean Tiébert, stepped decisively into the ring and banned all coaches on the Butte. He also halved the number of parking spaces at the bottom of the hill, started charging 25 an hour for those that remained, and restricted waiting time to three hours.

"My, what a difference,"



Street artists say their earnings have dropped since the ladies got their way and coaches were banned from the Butte

said Ms Rémy. "The atmosphere has changed completely. Now we're getting the *touristes du cœur* — people who want to discover the real Montmartre."

But in the tree-lined Place du Tertre they are livid. "It's a shameful scandal in the history of a great city," said Kemal, who left Turkey 27 years ago and ever since has made a living cutting black paper silhouettes for tourists on the square.

"There was no consultation. There are 600 artists working up here, we are out-

doors all year round, we have families, we pay our taxes. People expect painters on the Place du Tertre. That's what they come for. Those women have no idea."

Since November, Kemal said, his earnings have dropped to about 240 a day from nearer 270.

"There are far fewer people," he said. "Not only that, but the ones that come won't pay. I ask 210 for a silhouette, not much, and the oldies who came in the coaches would pay it. Today I got three young couples

who'd walked up the steps, and none of them would give me more than £2. It's shameful."

Richard, the owner of the Mère Catherine restaurant overlooking the square, agrees. "This is the end of Montmartre as we know it," he said.

Like many restaurant and souvenir shop owners, Richard protested by hanging a black ribbon outside his premises during last autumn's *fête de la vendanges*, when Montmartre traditionally celebrates the harvest

from its one remaining vineyard.

But the matrons of Montmartre are on a roll. "Now that [the coach problem] is out of the way, we have high hopes of getting something done about the illegal parking," said Ms Rémy. "The mayor is most sympathetic. Then there's the litter, and those dreadful shop fronts that are so out of keeping, and a bylaw to stop the artists harassing people. I'm afraid they won't know what's hit them."

Job protests grow, page 6

Cook seeks to satisfy Algerians after snub

Ian Black and Stephen Bates in Strasbourg

B RITAIN and its European Union partners were last night struggling to find a way to placate Algeria after it rebuffed a proposed EU mission to express concern at recent massacres.

Ahmed Attaf, Algeria's foreign minister, announced that the level of a proposed delegation was "not appropriate". But he also made clear that the military-led government of President Lamine Zoual resented foreign involvement that did not include "combating terrorism".

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, in Strasbourg to launch Britain's presidency of the EU, said he was "disappointed and surprised" by Mr Attaf's claim. But he moved quickly to regain the initiative by saying that the level of representation was "not a sticking point".

Officials indicated last night that Mr Cook was prepared to raise immediately the delegation to minister-of-state level "to give the Algerians the higher profile they want". A visit to Algeria by Mr Cook himself was not ruled out if Algiers adapted its position.

Europe wanted to respond with "urgency and compassion", Mr Cook said in London later. "The purpose of the mission is clear: to demonstrate the strong feelings of the peoples of Europe about the suffering of the people of Algeria, and discuss how to end it."

But Mr Attaf's objections seemed to mark a return to Algiers' systematic refusal of offers of international aid or investigations into violence that has claimed an estimated 75,000 lives since 1992, when an insurgency began after the cancellation of elections. Islamists were poised to win.

Ironically, Mr Cook had hours earlier told the European Parliament there was no proof the Algerian government played a part in the killings of over 1,000 people in two weeks.

Whole villages have been attacked in the western province of Relizane and just south of Algiers, with few spared in an orgy of throat-slitting and burning. Last Sunday night 103 people were killed in Sidi Hamed, 20 miles from the capital.

The diplomatic mission was to have been led by Derek Flumby, the Foreign Office director for the Middle East and North Africa, with his opposite numbers from Luxem-



Disappointed: Robin Cook in Strasbourg yesterday

bourg and Austria — the other members of the EU "troika".

Mr Attaf said that François Gordon, Britain's ambassador to Algeria, could visit Sidi Hamed if he wished. "He does not need a visa to go anywhere inside Algeria and he can go wherever he wants."

Algeria's outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) called the government's rejection of the mission "a manoeuvre to buy time", suggesting it reflected internal divisions.

Diplomats said that after Algeria showed signs it was unhappy about the visit, despite having agreed to it in principle, the mission's purpose had been carefully defined to avoid suggestion that it would investigate killings. EU policy towards Algeria is complicated by dependence on the country's oil and gas and fears that fundamentalist violence might spread, especially to the former colonial power, France.

Mr Cook called on the Algerian government to allow foreign media access and added: "The governments of the international community also have a legitimate interest. We have learned too often in the past that if we allow terrorism to take root in any one country, it can all too quickly be exported to other countries."

And in another sign that the Algerian military may be losing patience, a senior FIS member, Abdelkader Hachani, was arrested and released after giving interviews to European newspapers urging Western governments to pressure the government to talk to the FIS. Algerians arriving in other countries should not be turned back even if their status as refugees is doubtful, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, said yesterday.

Tory MPs back scheme for grassroots to elect leader

Michael White and Lucy Ward

CONSERVATIVE MPs yesterday gave overwhelming support to William Hague's sweeping reforms of their party's structure, which will give grassroots Tory activists the right to elect future leaders — after an MPs-only primary has vetoed out no-hope candidates.

The historic vote, which allowed the Tory leader's aides to claim that their leadership elections will now be "far more democratic" than the Labour Party's, came after party activists made plain to MPs that they must pay the price for their indiscipline before their crushing defeat on May 1.

Voting by secret ballot among the 164 Tory survivors last night yielded 110 votes for a new form of No Confidence vote to trigger a leadership contest. Only 36 MPs voted for the status quo, with five abstentions and one spoiled

paper. MPs will wait a week before agreeing the small print of the contest.

But they emphatically backed the leadership scheme, endorsed by the executive of the backbench 1922 committee after a late U-turn, whereby MPs will stage a primary election, then leave the 360,000 ordinary party members to pick from among any candidate with 25 per cent of MPs' votes.

That option won 102 votes, against 24 for the MPs-only status quo, 10 for an electoral college like Labour's, and 13 for an MPs' primary followed by an electoral college system.

Later, the chairman of the 1922 committee, Sir Archie Hamilton, said the reforms showed the way forward.

Mr Hague, who voted for the winning package himself, hailed the vote as historic. He said: "The decision shows that the Conservative Party at all levels is embracing my programme of radical reform."

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Shirley Bassey (left) was devastated by the result, her solicitor said. Shirley Bassey, jubilant after victory, said she had not wanted the case to go to court

PHOTOGRAPHS: MAX MUMBY (left) and SEAN SMITH

Bassey takes plaudits and flowers from court triumph

Russell Nicoll

IT WAS the trial of the century — in Brentford at least — and the celebrations as it ended mimicked Shirley Bassey's own epic finale.

Ms Bassey had won. The claims made by Hilary Levy, her sometime assistant for 15 years, that Ms Bassey had hit her and called her a Jewish bitch had been dispatched.

Judge Marcus Edwards brought the two-day hearing at Brentford crown court in west London to an end lauding Ms Bassey as a "straightforward witness" who "did not seem to overstate facts".

Ms Bassey turned with tears of joy to her legal team and proffered heartfelt hugs. It seemed only a

matter of time before she began singing "Kiss me, honey, honey, kiss me".

Ms Levy had sued Ms Bassey for breach of contract. The 44-year-old Londoner claimed she had been forced to leave Ms Bassey's South African tour in December 1993 after a vicious argument and violence. She told the court Ms Bassey had entered her hotel room, slapped her on the shoulder, called her a Jewish bitch and stormed out.

Ms Bassey disagreed. She said she had pushed her "hysterical" assistant and called her a "spoilt Jewish princess".

Judge Edwards thought Ms Levy was "not as fully frank and helpful" as he had hoped. "She professed to having a very clear image of being slapped on the left shoulder which I

found improbable in the circumstances — she was facing Miss Bassey. And then it was found out she had previously said she was slapped on the right shoulder," he said.

The judge revelled in Ms Bassey's honesty. "She was unshaken in her evidence about the crucial argument and pointed out how unwise it would have been for

her to sack her personal assistant in the middle of a tour," he said.

After the judgment, Ms Levy rushed into the grey London day with her brother, leaving her solicitor, Jim McKenzie, to say she was devastated but unrepentant. "She committed herself for 15 years to pandering every whim of Shirley Bassey," he said. "She

suffered very much, she is basically devastated but she doesn't regret in the slightest bringing the case to court."

Ms Levy could face Ms Bassey's costs of £250,000.

The crowd outside clearly thought Ms Levy right to sink away. If she had been wearing a hat yesterday it would have been black. On the other hand Ms

Bassey was wearing a lovely brown fur hat. She emerged to cries of joy from her supporters who rushed up to her offering flowers. "I do not hate [Ms Levy]," she said. "She was doing what she thought she should... but the truth got out as always. I did not want this to go to court... I have fought the case regardless of cost in order

to defend my name and reputation, in order to protect my career, and as a point of principle."

And with that she threw flowers to the ecstatic crowd and disappeared in her chauffeur-driven Mercedes. She, who once had nothing, now has it all.

Darling, I was wonderful, Guardian women, G2 page 5



'Key to life' found in US

Tim Radford
Science Editor

AMERICAN scientists claim to have discovered how to extend the life of human cells — throwing light on why we grow old, and why we may get cancer.

Woodring Wright and Jerry Shay of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre report in the Journal Science tomorrow that a "cellular fountain of youth" — an enzyme called telomerase — made human cells in a laboratory dish go on dividing long past their normal lifespan.

Humans start from one cell at conception, and grow by cell division. After a while, however, cells "age" and stop dividing. At the end of each chromosome there are repeated sequences of DNA called telomeres, and these get shorter each time the cells divide, as if they were a life-line which would sooner or later come to an end.

But reproductive cells seem to go on dividing indefinitely, as do cancer cells. Both contain telomerase. The experiment confirms what biologists have thought for years: telomerase plays a role in resetting the biological clock.

"This research raises the possibility that we could take the patient's own cells, rejuvenate them, modify the cells as needed, and then give them back to the patient to treat a variety of genetic and other diseases," said Dr Wright.

The potential long-term applications are staggering. The two Texans have been collaborating with a biotechnology company, Genex Corp, and its stock rose 45 per cent after the announcement.

But it may be years before medical scientists work out how to use the knowledge. "We are not going to have a great pill, or an injection. It is not in itself going to lead to a drug," said Elizabeth Mills of Research Into Ageing.

But there may be ways in which telomerase can lead to better understanding of ageing.

One candidate for treatment is cancer. Gordon McVie of the Cancer Research Campaign in Britain said telomerase had already been identified as a possible target for cancer drugs. What was needed was proof. "Much of the evidence has come from study of malignant cells, but because malignant cells are immortal, that's why they are bloody dangerous."

Alleged Docklands bomb conspirators aroused suspicion by paying too much for second hand car

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

TWO alleged IRA conspirators aroused the suspicions of a used car dealer because they paid too much for a second hand car, an Old Bailey jury heard yesterday. The dealer noted their Irish accents and the fact that they were happy to pay well over the odds for an old Renault.

The two men were on a dummy run in preparation for the IRA's Docklands lorry bomb which killed two men and caused £150 million damage in February 1996. One of the men, James McCordle, was now in the dock, prosecuting counsel John Bevan QC said.

McCordle, aged 30, is pleading not guilty to the murders of newsagent Imam Bashir and his assistant, John Jef-

fries, on February 9, 1996. McCordle and Patrick McKinnley, 34, are pleading not guilty to conspiring to cause explosions.

Mr Bevan said that on January 15, 1996, two men in an empty lorry converted into a car carrier had taken the ferry from Northern Ireland to Stranraer and had driven on to Carlisle.

The following day the pair had gone to a car auction in

Carlisle and had bought two used cars.

A car dealer with 25 years experience had noticed the two men and had been puzzled that they were prepared to pay more than £500 for the Renault which he had valued at much less. The dealer, Mr Lee, had assumed that they were not car dealers because they were prepared to pay so much.

He was then "entertained"

by watching them trying to drive the car on to the lorry without a ramp.

In fact, Mr Bevan said, the men were on a dummy run, using the same lorry that would act as a bomb the following month. They had bought a car to put on the lorry so as not to arouse suspicion by taking an empty vehicle backwards and forwards from Belfast.

"What more sensible for a

dummy run than to use a car transporter to transport a car?" he asked. "Clearly a transporter going both ways empty might arouse the suspicion of the port authority."

McCordle had been one of the pair but it was not suggested McKinnley had been on the dummy run, he said.

The Renault and another second hand car bought at the time were both taken back to Ireland. Within 48 hours both

were in the hands of McKinnley, he said. The prosecution case in that McKinnley played a background role in the conspiracy.

The following month the lorry was used for the bomb attack, said Mr Bevan. Video stills showed it on its way to London. "They are sobering photos, are they not? A huge bomb travelling south to London during the ceasefire."

The case continues.

Loyalist funeral brings Protestant mourners deep into republican west Belfast. John Mullin reports

A death that bridged Ulster's divide

HE was born in 1969, just as The Troubles were beginning, and he was christened at Holy Trinity church in west Belfast. They said funeral mass for him there yesterday, for he was the first victim of Northern Ireland's terrorist violence in 1998.

People forget Northern Ireland's victims. The names dominate the television and newspapers for a time and the public shares in the grief. But memories fade and, in the end, only family and friends are left to recall the details and feel the loss.

Not, though, Terry Enright. The Loyalist Volunteer Force could have had no conception of the wall of grief it was opening early on Sunday when it shot dead the Catholic doorman outside a city centre nightclub. His was the biggest funeral in west Belfast since the hunger strikers died 17 years ago, and his name will be seared in the public consciousness.

His life was dedicated to bridging the sectarian divide. He was a community worker



Deirdre Enright, carries the coffin of her murdered husband, (right). PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN LITTLE



who fought for disadvantaged youngsters of whatever faith, and one of his closest friends was Shankill Road man Billy Hutchinson, of the Progressive Unionist Party.

His death also bridged the divide. Although he was married to Deirdre, a niece of Gerry Adams, the Space Club where he worked part time

was owned by relatives of David Ervine, the Loyalist politician. More important was the turnout yesterday. Protestants crossed the peace line — most for the first time — to journey deep into republican west Belfast and join at least 6,000 mourners.

There were no fewer than 254 death notices in Tuesday's Irish News, and they were repeated yesterday. No one could remember so many before. So it was always likely to be a big affair. How big surprised everyone.

Just as the coffin left the family home in Whitelock Road, his younger daughter, Aoife, appeared. Not yet two, she ran about in her smart maroon coat and hat, waving happily at everyone, not quite sure what was going on. His other daughter is Clara, five.

His wife, Deirdre, was devastated, yet somehow in fragile control, staring into the middle distance and clutching a single red rose. She helped carry her husband's coffin into church.

His procession had been flanked throughout by his friends from Gort-na-Mona,

the Gaelic football and hurling club where he played and coached. As only 1,000 people were able to get inside the church, they crammed around two loudspeakers outside. Many wept as they listened to the tributes inside.

One young girl, who played with the canonic team, a form of hurling, said: "We will miss you. You were a big man with a big heart, and if personality was money, you would have died a millionaire."

Evil men may have robbed us of an irreplaceable and beloved husband, father, son, brother, friend and colleague, but they cannot destroy the good that Terry has done. That goes with him before God and it had left a lasting impression on all those who knew and loved Terry."

The mourners included Gerry Adams, whose tough voice cracked as he spoke of Enright on Sunday, and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin chief negotiator. Also there was Pastor Jack McKee, who works with reformed Loyalist paramilitaries on the Shankill Road.

News in brief

Recall over breast X-rays

ONE thousand women who had breast screening X-rays done by the Elmbridge breast screening service between April 1996 and March 1997 are being recalled for re-screening after a routine inspection of 16,000 mammograms showed some were not up to standard.

But Ian Galloway, medical director of Royal Hull Hospitals NHS Trust, which manages the service, stressed the recall was precautionary, and did not mean cancers had been missed.

"Within three weeks all 1,000 women involved should have a new mammogram and know their results."

Rap singer faces arrest

MARYLEBONE magistrates yesterday issued a warrant for the arrest of rap star Mark Morrison after he failed to appear in the central London court on a charge of possessing an offensive weapon.

The warrant was not backed for bail, which means he will be held in custody after arrest, until a bail application is made.

He was due to appear after a truncheon was allegedly found under a seat in his car when he was stopped for a traffic offence last August. Morrison's lawyer, David Evans QC, said afterwards: "I've no idea where he is. This is the first time he has missed a court appearance."

Eight fight off violent dog

FIVE police officers and three dog handlers fought for 15 minutes to rescue a woman attacked by her pet, believed to be a pit bull terrier, in Glasgow on Tuesday.

Anne Marie McGrory, 29, had emergency surgery yesterday for extensive bites. Strathclyde police, summoned by neighbours, found Miss McGrory trapped in a room and being savaged. The dog was eventually restrained. After a second attack, it collapsed and died at the scene.

Portillo cheers the Tory sceptics

Euro wars: Ousted hero goes beyond Hague time limit

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

MICHAEL Portillo took another step in establishing himself as the main rival to William Hague since last night when he warned a single currency would encourage nationalist extremists throughout Europe.

In only his second major speech since spectacularly losing his seat in May, Mr

Portillo was uncompromising in opposing Britain joining the single currency.

The speech will please not only rightwingers at Westminster but the rank and file of the party, which is mainly Euro-sceptical.

The former defence secretary said: "Moving away from democratic control is retrograde in itself but it is also highly dangerous, because disillusion and grievance provide a breeding ground for nationalism and extremism."

He was careful to express support for Mr Hague, saying he had dealt "brilliantly" in setting out an argument against the currency, but he went well beyond the Conservative leader, who has only ruled out entry for 10 years. Mr Portillo ruled it out in

principle: "In the interests of security, of tolerance and harmony between nations, in the interests of preserving the most valued gain of the post-war period — which is democracy — we should turn from the head-long rush towards European political integration in which the single currency is a decisive step."

Mr Portillo was quiet in the months immediately after the election but made a huge impact at the Conservative conference in October when he repositioned himself by expressing regret at the Tory party's image as uncaring. This time the appeal was aimed primarily at the party rather than the public. He portrayed an integrated Europe as unstable, because people would be frustrated at

distant government and would retreat into nationalism.

"Integration is being designed in a way that sharply reduces democratic control."

"If we shoe-horn the nations of Europe into an artificial union, we will not abolish nationalism, indeed we risk stirring it up. The danger is that we make people feel that their national interests will be overlooked, and that they cannot assert them through the ballot."

"That risks exactly what the architects of the new Europe say that they wish to avoid: destabilising Europe, creating tensions and releasing resentments that damage the present good relations between European nations."

Mr Hague will solidify his

position by appointing his own people to the shadow cabinet — so that, should Mr Portillo eventually return to the Commons as he intends, it will be harder for him to mount a challenge. But Mr Portillo is trying to establish his credentials as a serious thinker in case Mr Hague should become so unpopular within the party that he has to give way.

In his lecture to a Tory think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs, in London, Mr Portillo recalled that his Spanish father had fought for democracy in Spain "and was a refugee from tyranny for 20 years. To see democracy restored there brought my family great joy." And it was democracy that was Europe's best guarantee of security.

Gay Labour MP joins Marines

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

AN OPENLY gay Labour MP is to join the Marines — despite the Government's support for a continuing ban on homosexuals in the military.

Organisers of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme have cleared Kester's Ben Bradshaw to join a list of 20 MPs who will spend time living and training among serving troops.

Mr Bradshaw, who entered Parliament at the last election, applied for an attachment to the Royal Marines, who have a base within his constituency.

The Ministry of Defence

last night played down any suggestion of a conflict between the ban on gays in the military — currently being challenged by former servicemen and women in the European courts — and a scheme allowing an openly gay man to spend a week or more at a time with members of the forces.

However, lesbian and gay campaign group Stonewall called the decision "odd", pointing to a continuing ban on homosexuals in cadets and the Territorial Army as well as regular forces.

The scheme, running for nine years and funded by defence firms Vickers, British Aerospace and Rolls Royce, is designed to offer MPs a taste of military life.

France says hooligans risk 3 years' jail within hours

World Cup rowdies facing swift justice

John Duncan in Paris

FRENCH judges will be on 24-hour duty during this summer's World Cup, with magistrates inside the stadiums to enforce the government's tough new anti-hooligan legislation, it was announced yesterday.

Supporters could find themselves sentenced to up to three years in prison within 48 hours if they cause trouble this summer.

"We will bring suspected people before the courts rapidly should the problem move from being a policing to a judicial one," said Nicolas Jaquet, an official of the French ministry of justice.

The announcement of the French line on hooliganism came after a day of meetings in Paris between British and French police and football authorities to discuss law and order during France '98.

The Football Association said it was delighted with the approach, which represents a big shift from previous international tournaments and

matches in which English wingboomers have been expelled from the country, with the British police powerless to stop them returning abroad to cause more trouble.

The French police say that for the past 12 months they have signalled their intentions to enforce new hooligan measures brought in since 1993.

Magistrates have been instructed to hand out sentences of between one and three years for offences including incitement to hatred, throwing objects on to the pitch and drunken behaviour, and the authorities are determined that all cases will be brought to trial within 48 hours.

The biggest fear for the British authorities remains the possible black market in tickets for matches involving England, which could make efforts to segregate fans futile. Only 8 per cent of tickets will be made available to the Football Association for any England game. The rest are mainly sold to French supporters (60 per cent) and sponsors (20 per cent), with Eng-

land's opponents also receiving 8 per cent and federations around the world another 4 per cent.

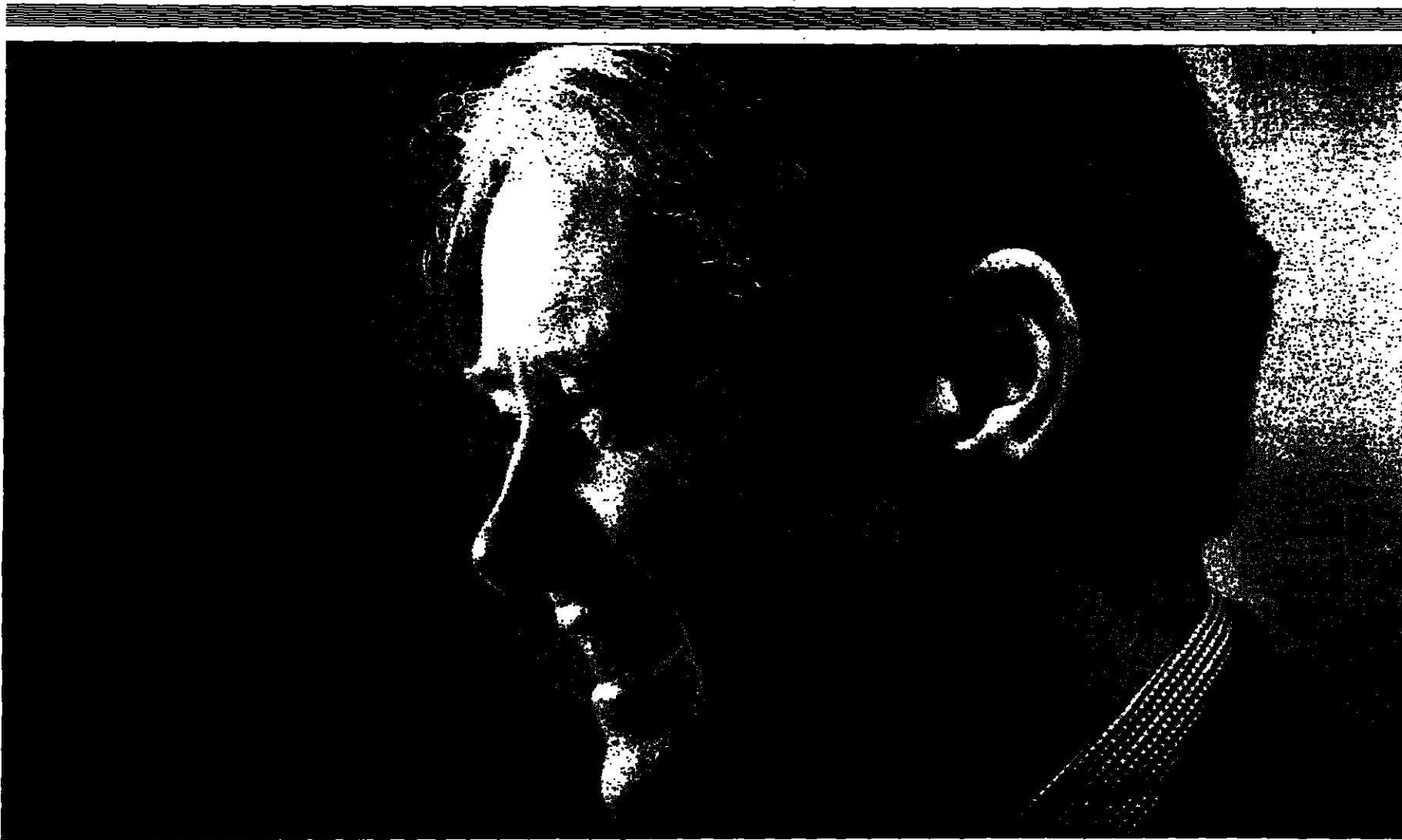
That will mean only 4,000 tickets are available for England fans in each of the first round games, to be distributed among the 32,000 members of the England Travel Club. The FA is lobbying hard to convince Fifa, the international governing body, to give it more.

However, the FA declared itself "very impressed" with the organisation of the tournament and has won a number of small but important victories that it hopes will help the tournament to be as fan-friendly as Euro '96. The organisers will employ English stewards for games involving England. FA announcements will be in English and transport will be arranged for England fans.

"We want a carnival atmosphere," said Dominic Spino, who heads the organisers' security operation. "That recognises that the overwhelming majority of English fans who come here will be law-abiding football supporters."



Amy Secombe, who is to play Diana in a film, and George Jackos, who is to play Dodi. No money will go to the memorial fund. PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER



Gerry Robinson: 'I did turn it down at first... But I got the impression that Chris Smith was committed to change' PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEAVER

Granada man takes poisoned chalice

Gerry Robinson to take over, reluctantly, from Lord Gowrie as chairman of the Arts Council with efficiency his prime aim

Dan Gilaister
Arts Correspondent

THE Arts Council of England yesterday succeeded in finding a replacement — albeit a reluctant one — for its chairman, Lord Gowrie. The appointment of Gerry Robinson, chairman of the Granada Group, to the "poisoned chalice" of the arts world was announced by the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, as it emerged that Mr Robinson had initially turned down the offer.

"I did turn it down at first," Mr Robinson, 49, confirmed last night. "You could say that I was not enthusiastic about it. I felt it would be one of those things where



Lord Gowrie: stepping down a year early

you would not get enough freedom of movement to do anything.

"But I got the impression that Chris Smith was committed to changing the organisation and would provide the necessary support. You've just got to put your tin hat on and take the hard decisions."

His first task would be to make the council more efficient. "It's important that we try to get the maximum value out of the small sums of money we contribute to the arts if you are going to persuade the Government that it is money well spent."

Granada Group owns Granada Television and London Weekend Television as well as hotels and restaurants. Mr Robinson is also on the board of BSkyB. He announced his support for Labour at the beginning of last year, donating £10,000 and helping to make a party political broadcast. He succeeds Lord Gowrie in the unpaid post in May.

Lord Gowrie is stepping down a year earlier than expected.

Announcing the appointment, Mr Smith said: "I am delighted that Gerry has agreed to lead the Arts Council. I look forward to working with him to ensure the long-term health and stability of the arts in this country. He will take over a council which Lord Gowrie has led with distinction for some years."

Lord Gowrie said: "Gerry Robinson is a brilliant man and no stranger to the management of change. Mr Robinson is the right person to ensure that change can occur in an orderly way to the maximum benefit of artists and all of us who are challenged and sustained by their achievements."

The role of the council has been transformed by the influx of money from the National Lottery. But it has come under increasing criticism. The first among Mr Robinson's tasks will be to help

appoint a new secretary general. Graham Devlin has been acting secretary general, effectively the chief executive of the organisation, since Mary Allen left controversially last May to take up the post of chief executive at the Royal Opera House. The organisation is also seeking a new vice-chairperson.

The second task will be to streamline what is seen as an unwieldy bureaucracy. The council, a plethora of committees, boards, panels and advisors charged with distributing £200 million of lottery money and £184 million of grants each year to the nation's arts companies, is a confusing jumble even to the people who work for it. Embroiled in a culture of secrecy, it has been slow to respond to the demands of accountability raised by the arrival of the lottery.

In a departure from previous practice, the chairman's role was advertised, in accordance with the Nolan

guidelines, and a company of headhunters was brought in. The appointment is for three years — also a departure from previous practice. Lord Gowrie was appointed for five.

Reaction in the TV industry was guarded, with some concerned about the effect of high public profile of the council chairmanship could have on the Granada Group. One insider said: "Gerry Robinson has ridden on a wave of success at Granada. Will he be able to put up with the criticism at the council? The potential knock-on effect to Granada is disastrous. Morale is already low at the company."

But there was support for the organisation from within the arts community. Thelma Holt, a member of the council said: "This is very good news indeed for the arts. Gerry Robinson is no stranger to the harsh realities of economic conditions, but he has already proved that he loves the art and that will ensure him a warm welcome."

Diana, the movie, or a tale of taste and hypocrisy

Farrukh Nadeem

KELVIN MACKENZIE, thought by many to be the greatest tabloid editor of his generation, sat protectively between living replicas of Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi Fayed.

"It would be most unfair for journalists to treat these two young actors like Robin Cook," the former editor of the Sun cautioned the jackals of the press. "An entire nation's grief should not rest on the shoulders of two professionals."

Amy Secombe, who last appeared in Ben Elton's *Gaspang*, looked up at the big man and dropped her chin in the classic Diana "coy" look. On the other side of Mr Mackenzie was George Jackos, who has appeared in *Soldier, Soldier* and *Heartbeat*.

Mr Mackenzie is managing director of Mirror Television, which is making *The People's Princess*, to be broadcast on the satellite channel LIVE TV. The movie, which tracks the princess's life after her divorce, is to be filmed on Mallorca and should be released around April 15. The project has come under fire for tastelessness. Mishcon de Reya, the lawyers who act for Diana's memorial fund, called it "inappropriate and insensitive".

Mirror Television argues that it charts Diana's search for "fulfilment in her public role as the 'queen of people's hearts', despite constant harassment and violation by the paparazzi".

Mishcon de Reya had claimed the film makers required permission from Diana's family to make the movie. But, said Mr Mackenzie, "Diana was the single most famous person to walk on this planet and the idea that you cannot make a film about her is ludicrous."

He added that there was no intention of giving any money the film makes to the memorial fund.

There will be no sex scenes, nor the fatal crash. "Everyone knows about what happened in the tunnel and that is not what the story's about," said Nigel Thomas, the film's producer. "It is a romance that we are trying to portray, not a recreation of a car accident."

The villains look set to be the paparazzi. Asked whether this was a touch hypocritical given his previous career, Mr Mackenzie would not comment. "It's Nigel's movie," he said.

The names Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed are being stamped on ecstasy tablets on sale in nightclubs, with RIP on the opposite side.

Crackdown on school bullies

Martin Wainwright

A POLICE crackdown on a gang of school bullies, which has ended with a string of convictions and custodial sentences, is expected to intensify the fight against classroom intimidation and blackmail across the country.

Detectors in South Yorkshire have been "inundated" with inquiries after smashing the "Gang on the Wall" who demanded money with menaces from pupils at a Doncaster comprehensive.

Pupils at the school, which cannot be named for legal reasons, were so intimidated that they resorted to hiding dinner money in the folds of their ties or under several layers of clothing.

Police were told by one victim of the gang — members' ages ranged from 13 to 15 — that he wore three pairs of socks and two pairs of trousers to stash his money away.

Two 14-year-old ringleaders of the gang, nicknamed because members sat on a wall outside the school after they were excluded, admitted a total of nine robberies and two offences of demanding money with menaces at Sheffield crown court.

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Adjourning sentencing for reports, Judge David Bentley warned both boys that custodial sentences were possible.

Two other gang members are already serving youth custody terms in the wake of Operation Abacus, which saw down arrests of 10 youths in the style of raids on adults suspected of major crime. A total of 39 charges, including assault, robbery and blackmail followed relating to the stealing of cash, jewellery, clothing, pens and books.

Other forces are expected to follow South Yorkshire's initiative in similar cases of severe and organised intimidation, which traditionally have been left to schools to solve.

PC Lynette Ball, who led the painstaking work of persuading frightened pupils to describe the racket, said: "We hope that this will send a message to bullies in other schools that their behaviour is unacceptable and could have grave consequences."

Record payout for abused patient

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

A WOMAN who alleges she became pregnant by a nurse while undergoing treatment for depression in a psychiatric hospital has won £70,000 in an out-of-court settlement from the health authority which employed the nurse.

The payment from Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth health authority in south London is believed to be a record for cases in which psychiatric nurses are accused of having sexual relations with patients. The woman's solicitor, Maggi Young, who specialises in mental health cases, said she had settled two earlier cases for £5,000 and

£10,000 but had not heard of any previous settlement as large as £70,000.

The woman, who does not want to be named, was an inpatient at Springfield hospital, south London, in April 1991. She says a relationship started after the nurse asked her to meet him in Battersea Park on an outing from the hospital. She says they had sex at his house and, after she left the hospital, at her flat.

In September she discovered she was pregnant and the alleged relationship ended. After having an abortion she made several suicide attempts. She went back to her job as an insurance company administrator but found it difficult to work and was made redundant.

"When I discovered I was

pregnant I just couldn't take any more," she said. "I was trying to go to work as normal but I was cutting myself, which I'd never done before. I cut a lot and took overdoses and I ended up at Henderson hospital, a therapeutic community, for nine to 10 months."

It is a criminal offence under the Mental Health Act 1983 for a male staff member of a hospital or nursing home to have sex with a female patient, and health department guidance says that where an allegation is serious and substantial police should be notified immediately. The woman, now aged 36, made her allegations to a locum psychiatrist in October 1991. She told him that the nurse was frequently telephoning her and threaten-

ing to reveal confidential information to her family.

The health authority did not inform the police of her allegations until February 1992, pending an internal investigation, and alerted the nurses' professional body, the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors (UKCC), only the following August.

By February the woman had had her abortion and it was too late to take DNA samples from the foetus. The Crown Prosecution Service decided there was insufficient evidence to prosecute. The health authority sacked the nurse and in 1995 his name was subsequently removed from the register of nurses by the UKCC.

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Two other boys are already serving youth custody terms in the wake of Operation Abacus, which saw down arrests in the style of raids on adults suspected of major crime.

The challenge is to teach computers to understand context and clarify ambiguity. Say 'go to hell' and the computer will shut down. The future of mouth to mouse

G2 Online, page 12

Demonstrations by jobless French turn violent

Jon Herley in Paris

A DAY after riot police were called in for the first time to quell their violent protests, France's angry unemployed called another day of national demonstrations yesterday — the third in as many weeks — and warned the government that their campaign signalled the birth of a new movement.

The marches and sit-ins by unions representing the 3.1 million unemployed seemed to be escalating as leaders of student movements and low-paid workers promised to back the protests in 77 of France's 95 regions on Saturday.

"This is the beginning of the jobless movement," said Richard Dethy, an organiser for one of the four pressure groups demanding an immediate increase in benefits.

They are also calling for an end to the laws that allow landlords to evict jobless tenants and energy companies to cut supplies to unemployed customers who cannot pay.

"The movement will continue and get bigger. We are going forward," he said.

"Now we are beginning to have a real influence on government decisions."

The protests are an embarrassment to the coalition of Socialists, Greens and Communists headed by Lionel Jospin. He was elected last June on a promise to make the fight against France's 12.4 per cent unemployment rate his first priority.

With Green politicians openly voiced their support for the campaign, and Alain Bocquet, head of the Communist parliamentary group, saying yesterday that the government "must respond" to its demands, Mr Jospin's popular support could be badly eroded before the regional elections in March.

Observers said yesterday that the protest movement could start spinning out of control.

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Spanish miners dig in against inevitable end

Adela Gooch in Madrid reports on a coal industry that is determined to die fighting

LORENZO Gallardo was run over and killed as he helped build a barricade on a miners' picket line in the northern region of Asturias earlier this week.

To his striking colleagues, he was as much a victim of the official indifference and neglect they claim is killing their industry as the 30 men who die working in Spanish mines each year.

"It was as if the government had run him down," said a bitter colleague after Gallardo, aged 38 and married with two children, was hit by a car. The impact sent his body crashing into a roadside barrier on the ninth day of the coal industry strike.

The miners are not fighting the Spanish government this time, but the European Union, which is threatening that Spain speed up plans to cut production and curb subsidies.

Its existence defies economic logic. Each tonne of coal extracted by Spain's state mining companies costs about £150. Under a system of set prices dating back to General Franco's regime, it was sold at more than double the price of imported coal to other state-run industries.

When the Socialists began the reforms in 1984 there were just under 50,000 miners. Now they number fewer than half that. Profitable pits were sold to private owners, but those remaining — heavily loss-makers — must eventually close.

But the miners have tugged at heart strings, exerted political pressure and managed to keep their way of life going against all odds. Now, they know that the writing is finally on the wall.

Under a plan agreed last May, the state-owned Hunosa and Pineda companies will cut employee numbers from 10,000 to 7,000 in three years and production will drop from 2.5 million tonnes to 2.1 million. Subsidies will no longer be tied to production but put at a set level.

'Brussels. What would they know in Brussels about mines or mining?'

For the EU, this is not enough. It wants production to come down to 1.5 million tonnes and is unhappy about plans to employ 1,000 new miners to offset an early retirement programme.

Urging the government to stand up to Brussels, miners in Asturias, the area worst affected, called a strike to "paralyse the region".

The miners still command public sympathy. Coal mines are concentrated in areas such as Asturias and Leon

where there are few alternative forms of employment.

The industry also has an emotional hold on many Spaniards because of its close links to left-wing political movements. In 1934, Asturian miners took control of the region after a general strike. Some 3,000 died when the army was sent in to crush the revolt.

The industry minister, Josep Piqué, has promised he will try to persuade the European Commission that the plan he negotiated must be allowed to stand.

The miners' determination to keep the pits alive is all the more remarkable because of the grim conditions in which they work and the generous terms offered if they retire — a monthly pension of between 250,000 and 300,000 pesetas (£1,050-£1,300).

The coal seams are narrow and the miners struggle alone in dark vertical tunnels, balanced precariously with their pneumatic drills. Accidents are common and the toll on their health is devastating.

But the government is determined to tread softly. It fears the unrest will spread to ship building and steel, also targeted in privatisation and reform programmes.

The miners, meanwhile, have identified a new foe, joining Spain's farmers in their anti-European stance.

"Brussels. What do they know in Brussels about mines or mining?" the Asturian picketers mutter as they threaten to relive their history by calling another general strike.

Clashes in Poland



Riot police chase demonstrators during clashes in the Polish city of Slupsk after the funeral of 13-year-old Przemek Czajka. PHOTOGRAPH: JANEK SZKWARCZYNSKI

Anger flares as boy is buried

MOURNERS at the funeral of a 13-year-old Polish boy who died after being hit with a police truncheon ignored the family's appeals for calm yesterday, throwing stones at the police officers who blocked the route of a subsequent march to the site of the killing.

Youths have rioted for three consecutive nights in the northern city of Slupsk since Przemek Czajka was killed walking home from a

basketball match on Saturday. Dozens of officers have been injured.

Youths, including hundreds from other cities, gathered outside the Heart of Jesus church in the city centre for the funeral. Jacek Daszkiewicz, a 20-year-old carpenter, had travelled 250 miles from Warsaw. "I came here to show my solidarity with him," he said.

After the funeral, a crowd of 1,000 walked towards the spot where the boy was killed.

When police vans appeared, people in the crowd threw stones and shouted: "Death for death."

The clashes spread to other parts of the city. The police have said that on Saturday night they were responding to reports of hoodlums among the basketball fans. The fans say they were only crossing the road against the lights.

A forensic laboratory in nearby Gdansk carried out an autopsy on Przemek but the authorities have delayed publishing its findings.

A 37-year-old police sergeant suspected of hitting the boy with a rubber baton has been arrested.

This week the government announced a review of police handling of sports events and crowds. It has also sent a team to investigate the incidents in Slupsk. — Agencies

Ousted president's men fight to the end

Street clashes threaten to cloud today's inauguration of Montenegro's new leader, writes Karen Coleman in Podgorica

MONTENEGROAN police fired tear gas at protesters and used water cannon to disperse them as trouble erupted on the streets of the capital yesterday afternoon, hours before the inauguration of Milo Djukanovic today as president of the tiny Yugoslav republic.

Hundreds of people tried to break into his offices after thousands of protesters supporting the outgoing president, Momir Bulatovic, marched through Podgorica to support demands for fresh elections.

Minutes before leading the march, Mr Bulatovic told the crowd that talks with his reformist rivals to diffuse political tensions had collapsed. He is refusing to accept the outcome of the presidential election held last October, accusing Mr Djukanovic of rigging the vote. Since Monday thousands of people have pro-

tested in the capital's streets for a new ballot.

Mr Djukanovic's opponents say he is a secessionist who will lead the country towards independence from Serbia, the other republic in the rump Yugoslavia.

"We want all democratic people in the world to see what's going wrong in Montenegro. The presidential elections were irregular," said a factory worker, Misa Baticica.

Mr Djukanovic's supporters characterise the protesters as "illiterate peasants" who are clinging to the remnants of their communist past.

Mr Djukanovic's victory is also a serious blow to the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, who aims to change the federal constitution to enhance his power. Mr Djukanovic, who bitterly opposes Mr Milosevic, is likely to block such moves. He will have a seat on the supreme defence

council of the Yugoslav army, making it difficult for Mr Milosevic to use military force to suppress his opponents.

The son of a high court judge, Mr Djukanovic was born and grew up in the industrial town of Niksic. While studying economics at university, he became involved in the Montenegrin Communist Party and quickly rose to its ruling council. But in 1989 he supported Mr Milosevic's ousting of the old regime in Serbia and Montenegro.

His loyalty was rewarded in 1991 when he became Montenegro's prime minister. But he soured his relationship with Mr Milosevic last year by denouncing him and supporting the Serbian protest movement.

Down the road from the presidential building in Podgorica, Mr Djukanovic's victory is certainly welcomed by eight old communists, who gather in the aptly nicknamed Rick's Cafe for two hours every day to mourn the state of Montenegrin affairs.

Known as the wise old men, they have one thing in common — they all passionately

hate Mr Milosevic. Before he came to power, each held a senior government position, from ambassador to minister. But when Mr Milosevic overthrew the old regime in 1989, they were sacked.

"A vote for Djukanovic is a vote for Montenegro. At this moment he is the only person who is good for Montenegro," said Streten Asanovic, aged

67, the former president of Yugoslavia's Writers' Club. He voted for Mr Djukanovic, despite the incoming president's ambitions to introduce radical economic reforms.

Western diplomats have dismissed Mr Bulatovic's claim of electoral fraud. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe ruled

that October's elections were free and fair. The United States special envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbard, welcomed the election.

"If the new government is prepared to move ahead on broadening and deepening democratic processes and economic liberalisation, the US and other nations will find ways to support it," he said.

Smooth and handsome in his designer suits, Mr Djukanovic, with his Western image and economic ideas, appeals to the US in particular.

He needs the West for financial investment. Smuggling was rife when sanctions were imposed on Serbia and Montenegro for supporting the Serb offensive in Bosnia and Croatia. Mr Djukanovic, who has himself been accused of smuggling, wants to legalise the economy and attract international investment.

Six years after Croatia lost about a third of its land to Serb forces, it takes back control of eastern Slavonia today. The area has been run by the United Nations since the war. — Reuters

Mr Djukanovic's opponents say he is a secessionist who intends to break with Serbia

First lesbian couple to wed follow John and Yoko

TWO childhood sweethearts were due to become the Netherlands' first lesbian couple to marry, at the stroke of midnight last night.

Irina van Praag and Anna Kreuger, both 38, were to tie the knot under a law which came into effect on January 1 extending full

marriage rights, with the exception of joint adoption, to same-sex couples.

More than 500 guests were expected at a glittering ceremony at the Hilton hotel in Amsterdam. The couple planned to spend their wedding night in the suite where John Lennon and Yoko Ono celebrated

their honeymoon with a week of "bed peace" 30 years ago.

"John and Yoko were making a statement to the world, and that's also what we're doing," Ms Kreuger, a tram driver, said.

Three male couples have already married under the new act. — Reuters

Old threats to Antarctic remain as new ban comes into force

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

A CONTINENT was put off-limits to mining and oil exploration for the next 50 years when the Antarctic protocol came into force yesterday.

The protocol — now ratified by Japan, the last of 26 states claiming an interest in the continent to do so — protects the Antarctic and the sea bed south of latitude 60.

All explorers, scientific expeditions and tourist ventures will have to ask permission to enter the region and make an environmental damage assessment before doing so.

But the region is still threatened by a mixed fleet of 100 pirate fishing vessels plundering Antarctic waters in defiance of other international agreements designed to protect wildlife and natural resources.

An Australian fishing boat, the Austral Leader, reported an attempted ramming at the weekend by a Panamanian-registered pirate ship it confronted off Heard Island. The Australian navy has been put

on alert and is sailing 2,000 miles to the remote island to police the area.

In theory, the Southern Ocean, the roughest and most inhospitable in the world, is governed by the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), part of the same Antarctic treaty that gave birth to the protocol.

But pirate ships are flouting the rules and, although French paratroopers boarded three of them last year, there is no way of policing the whole ocean.

The prize the pirates are fishing for is the Patagonian toothfish, a deep-water, slow-breeding oily fish which fetches high prices in Japan. Although it is found throughout the Southern Ocean off the continental shelf of sub-Antarctic islands, stocks are rapidly being exhausted.

Chilean waters were fished out in 1992. Argentine waters by 1995, and last year the toothfish was said to be "almost gone" from South Africa's Prince Edward sub-Antarctic islands.

The pirates are estimated to have taken \$200 million worth of the fish from the waters.

Antarctic mining ban



are attracted by the squid used as bait on the lines.

The lift wing-span Wandering Albatross, the largest of the species, is being particularly badly hit. The colony on Macquarie Island, south of Australia, is down to 20 birds.

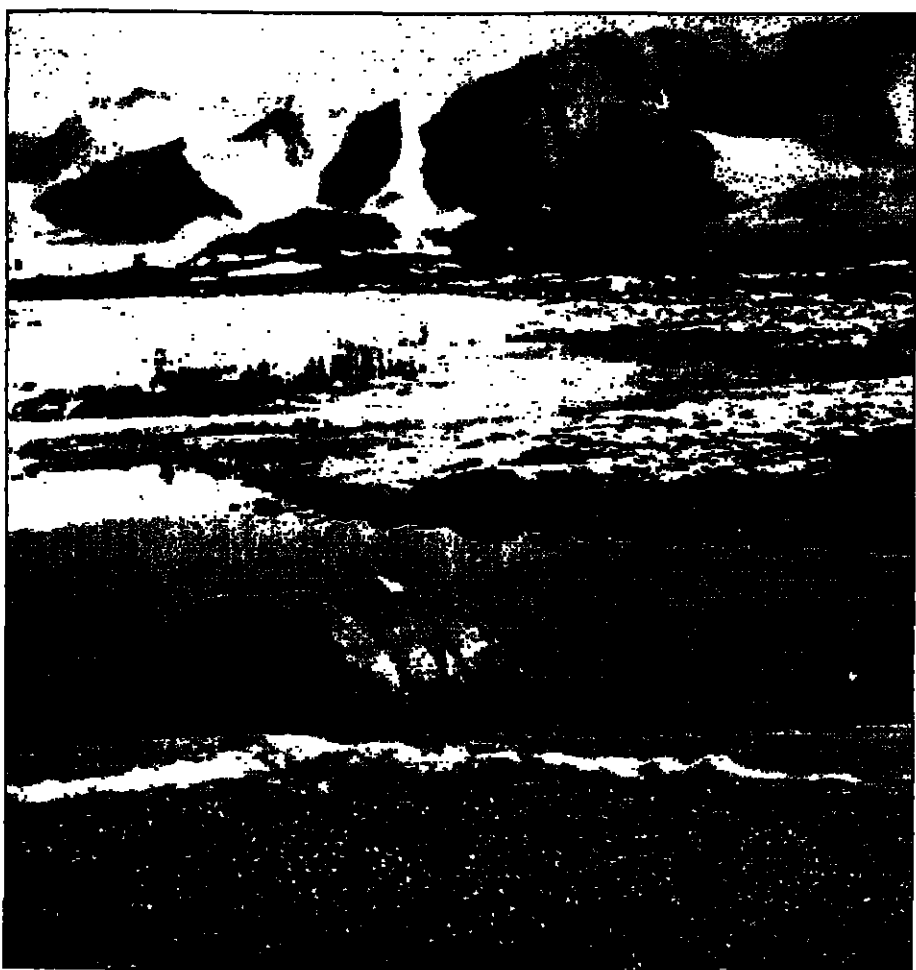
Dr Dunn said: "The Antarctic is a classic boom and bust fishery. When one area is fished out the fleet moves on. Eventually there will be nothing left."

It is totally irresponsible because no one knows how long these fish live and how quickly they can replace stocks. Fish of six feet or longer used to be common, now they are half that length."

He said many of the pirate ships were Norwegian- and Spanish-owned but registered under Panamanian and other flags of convenience so that they were technically outside the control of their domestic governments.

"The state of anarchy is such that even legitimate vessels turn their satellite tracking equipment off when they are competing with pirate vessels."

"No one really knows what is going on out there. It is a cut-throat business."



The protocol, which prevents mining and oil exploration for 50 years, requires scientists and explorers to ask permission before entering the region. PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES PEREZ

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Cardinal's address on Havana TV boosts new drive to lift food and medical embargo

End to Cuba ban urged

Martin Kettle in Washington

A WEEK before the Pope begins his historic visit to Cuba, a coalition of prominent Americans has called on the United States government to end its ban on the sale of food and medicines to the communist-ruled island.

Calling itself Americans for Humanitarian Trade with Cuba and organised by the US Chamber of Commerce, the group has urged a grassroots campaign to press Congress to modify the continuing blockade.

The move, announced at a crowded Washington press conference, came as the Archbishop of Havana was allowed to make the first address by a Church leader on Cuban television since the 1959 revolution.

Flanked by a portrait of the Pope and a statue of the Virgin Mary, Cardinal Jaime Ortega praised the Pope's visit and highlighted the Pope's opposition to economic sanctions which punish the poor. Cardinal Ortega specifically identified the US embargo against Cuba as an example of such suffering.

The Pope is widely expected to reiterate his criticism of the US economic sanctions when he arrives in Havana for a four-day stay on January 21.

The Vatican yesterday welcomed Cardinal Ortega's television appearance. "It was about time," a senior official said. "Several minutes granted to the Catholic hierarchy after 36 years of silence are really not that much."

The Vatican is pressing for the four papal masses during next week's visit to be televised live.

The Washington launch of the anti-sanctions campaign brought together critics from the business, political, exile and religious communities, among them General John Shuehan, who retired last year as commander of US forces in the Atlantic. He said the US should not impose such curbs on a country "that does not pose a military threat".

William Workman, of the US Chamber of Commerce, told reporters: "An open economy is the first step to democracy. The best thing we can do is send 1,000 American business-people to Cuba to cut deals and make it happen."

The launch was marked by announcements of support by distinguished members of previous US administrations, including the former Clinton administration treasury secretary Lloyd Bentsen, the Reagan administration

national security adviser Frank Carlucci, former US trade representative Carla Hills, President Nixon's attorney-general Elliot Richardson, and a former chairman of the Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker.

The campaign will focus on bipartisan attempts in both Houses of Congress to remove restrictions on the sale of food and medical supplies to Cuba from the all-embracing embargo law of 1962. The law allows the government to license special sales for humanitarian reasons, but the rules are so tight as to make exceptions practically impossible.

In addition, under the so-called Helms-Burton Act of 1996, transport companies which carry goods to Cuba are banned from doing business in the US for six months, and lawsuits can be brought against companies trading

with Fidel Castro's regime. "This cruel embargo is the cruelest of all embargoes that we have imposed on any people on earth," said a former Florida congressman, Sam Gibbons. He was supported by Dr Joan Campbell, of the National Council of Churches, who said: "It is wrong for the US to use 11 million Cubans as ammunition in an economic war against one man."

A New York congressman, Charles Rangel, who plans to attend a papal mass in Cuba, said he was pained that he was not able to explain to his hosts "why we are causing so much suffering".

The administration has not yet committed itself for or against the legislative proposals, but the president has so far been conspicuously unwilling to ease the economic embargo.

Julian Borger
Middle East Correspondent

ISRAEL laid claim to large tracts of the West Bank including the entire Jerusalem area yesterday as the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, prepared an apparently uncompromising negotiating stance for next week's summit talks in Washington.

Hopes of progress at the United States-brokered talks were dimmed by an Israeli cabinet communiqué listing vital and national interests in the West Bank.

The Palestinians, who claim most of the West Bank and a sector of Jerusalem as the focal point of a future state, quickly denounced the communiqué, which also angered US officials who had called for talks without preconditions on the West Bank's eastern edge and "the area surrounding the Jerusalem region".

Israel would also hold on to the West Bank's strategic infrastructure, including vital aquifers, key roads and "historic sites sacred to the Jewish people".

According to Mr Sharon's map two-thirds of the West Bank would remain under Israeli control in a final territorial settlement. In Mr Netanyahu's version, Israel would take half.

The Israeli communiqué, only a day after another cabinet declaration setting lengthy preconditions for a long-scheduled troop withdrawal from the West Bank, reportedly caused consternation in the US state department.

Diplomatic sources said that late last year Madeleine Albright, the secretary of state, had wanted to step up US pressure on Mr Netanyahu to force the acceleration of Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and a halt to the building of Jewish settlements. Dennis Ross, the special envoy to the Middle East, is reportedly being persuaded to give the Israeli prime minister a "last chance".

Yesterday's developments may prove a death knell for the "Ross option".

Netanyahu and the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. Britain and the European Union have already voiced opposition to Mr Netanyahu's policies, particularly the delay in troop withdrawals from the West Bank and the accelerated construction of Jewish settlements.

Derek Fatchett, a Foreign Office Minister currently touring the region, wrote a guest column yesterday in the Tel-Aviv daily, Ha'aretz, which was highly critical of the Israeli stance and called on both sides to "halt all actions that prejudice final status talks".

The cabinet communiqué put forward eight categories of "vital interests". It said Israel would retain existing Jewish settlements and a security area around them, the Jordan valley as an "eastern security zone", another buffer zone on the West Bank's western edge and "the area surrounding the Jerusalem region".

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A worker cleans ice from a shelter in Montreal, where much of the city centre was closed because of danger from falling ice. PHOTOGRAPH: SHALIN BERT

Bitter cold claims Quebec's sugar bush

Ice storms have left a million people without power in a corner of Canada, writes **Anthony DePalma** in St Paul D'Abbotsford

PROUD families that have farmed in Quebec province for generations are struggling without heat, electricity and water after the treacherous ice storms which devastated the region last week.

More than a million people are still affected. But, in the manner of Canadian back-

woodsmen, what they seem most worried about are not their own difficulties but the damage to the land, particularly the trees.

"These are trees like the tall pines planted 55 years ago by John Gibb's grandfather which now lie on their sides across his front yard; the delicate McIntosh apples in

Gregg Thomson's orchard, with buds suffocating under 4 inches of ice; and the wizen sugar maples whose snapping and splitting have kept Claude Chagnon awake all night.

"Every one of these trees, I know them; every one I tapped personally," said Mr Chagnon, aged 57. A hardy Quebecer, his life, like many others in the area, is tied to the land that has been so devastated. He cannot look at the damaged maples without turning his back so that strangers cannot see him cry.

Some of the trees were more than 100 years old.

The ice storms, which knocked out power throughout Quebec and eastern Ontario, disrupted the lives of more than 5 million people. Power has been restored to much of Montreal, Ottawa and other urban areas, although sporadic power cuts still occur.

But more than a million people around St Paul D'Abbotsford, a rural area south of

Montreal, have been told not to expect to have electricity for two or three more weeks.

"The black triangle" is what utility companies now call the area stretching roughly 45 miles south-east from the St Lawrence river to Granby and from there about 20 miles north to Ste-Hyacinthe.

The damage in this area is on an entirely different scale from that sustained in Montreal.

High-intensity steel pylons lie like twisted giants across frozen fields

Electricity poles have snapped in two about 10ft above ground, and fallen transformers leak green fluids on to the thick layer of ice that smothered the area.

High-intensity steel pylons lie like twisted giants in a long line across frozen fields, their cables played out over the landscape.

Local communities remain dark and quiet, except for the occasional hum of a petrol

generator or the roar of one of many Canadian Armed Forces trucks sent to provide help.

Canadians are used to winter. But the Canadian cold, while it can be brutal, is usually predictable. Meteorologists say the successive ice storms that pounded the area for five days last week were rare. It was not the cold that caused the initial damage, but the warm air at higher altitudes, which produced the rain that froze as it hit the ground.

"The weather really doesn't bother us, unless you have rheumatism," said John Gibb, a retired farmer aged 61, whose family has been in the area for six generations. "It's the extremes that get us. Maple trees just are not meant to have 4 inches of ice all over them."

Maples are more than ornamental here. Many people make their living by tapping the maples on the hillsides and cooking the sap to make maple syrup. In this part of Canada they call a stand of maples a "sugar bush".

After the ice storms, there is hardly a sugar bush intact. — *New York Times*

COULD YOU BE READY TO WORK ANYWHERE ON THIS PAGE WITHIN 24 HOURS?

ARMY BE THE BEST

ARMY BE THE BEST

ARMY BE THE BEST

Education 'ruins your sex life'

Martin Kettle in Washington

STUDENTS may seem to spend a lot of time having sex, but in the long run education is bad news for Americans' sex lives, says a study to be published next month.

Men and women who have been to graduate school have less sex than any other group, on the educational ladder, say the authors of a study which will appear in *American Demographics*. It is based on data from 10,000 adults who are part of the General Social Survey, a project based at the University of Chicago.

The study found that people who have been to graduate school average 62 sexual acts a year, or one a week. This compares with 61 sexual acts a year for college or university graduates and 59 a year for high school graduates — the equivalent of secondary school in Britain.

Co-author John Robin-

son, of the University of Maryland, told an interviewer that highly educated people may be better informed about sexually transmitted diseases and less willing to "engage in frivolous sex".

But the authors also find that people who work 60 or more hours a week are about 10 per cent more sexually active than people who work shorter hours.

The findings point to the fact that Americans are having a lot less sex than most people seem to think. About one in five adults did not have sex at all in the previous year and only one person in 20 has sex at least three times a week.

About 15 per cent of all adults engage in 50 per cent of the country's total sexual activity.

"It appears to everyone that we are a hypersexual society," said Geoffrey Godder, of Penn State University, a co-author. "In reality, people stay home a lot by themselves."

Pedestrians cross at New York jaywalk crackdown

Mark Tran in New York

NEW Yorkers are rebelling against Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's crackdown on jaywalkers — part of his campaign to improve the flow of traffic in a city notorious for gridlock.

In a move that has pleased drivers, he ordered pedestrian barriers to be set up at six busy city centre crossings. But some New Yorkers have dressed up as cows to protest at being treated like cattle. They argue that gridlock is usually caused by drivers blocking busy intersections and not by people crossing the street.

The loud raspberries from the public and police, among his most ardent supporters, that have greeted this initiative have forced Mr Giuliani to back down a bit. "Jaywalking is just one of a dozen or more things that you have to focus on," he said.

Many cops have already said they have no intention of enforcing the crackdown.

Far left politics reborn in new Japan

Jonathan Watts in Tokyo

THE Communist Party is touching new peaks of electoral popularity in Japan, amid deep mistrust of mainstream politics and the most prolonged economic slowdown since the end of the second world war.

In the past two years the Communist Party (JCP) has become a significant opposition force. In the general election of October 1996, it secured 7.3 million votes, or 13 per cent of the ballots cast — its best performance ever. Last July it doubled its seats in the Tokyo municipal assembly to become the second largest force in the chamber.

In town halls nationwide the party has increased its representation to become the biggest force in local government, with more than 4,000 seats.

"Japanese society is facing a political, economic and social crisis," said its chairman, Teruo Furuta. "In this situation, political sympathy has turned toward the JCP."

Political scandals, economic misjudgements and financial instability have pushed the ratings of Ryutaro Hashimoto's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) government to a record low of 30 per cent in recent months, but the opposition parties have been too busy arguing among themselves to capitalise on its disarray.

The New Frontier Party, the largest opposition force, split up last month after an internal row, leaving voters with the unifying sight of its former members trying to regroup and rename themselves for the third time this decade.

The Social Democratic Party, formerly the main party of the left, is teetering on the edge of electoral oblivion, having lost credibility by allying with the conservative LDP to gain power.

By contrast, the JCP, Japan's oldest political party, has built a reputation for integrity by refusing to accept government funds and by maintaining its name and identity in a constantly shifting political landscape. It has also proved better organised than most of the other parties, with a membership of 370,000 and sales of Red Flag, its daily newspaper, at 2.5 million.

This grassroots support allowed the JCP to field more candidates than any party in the last general election.

"There has been a strong atmosphere of anti-communism in Japan since before the war, but that kind of prejudice has started to dissipate recently and more people are paying attention to what we stand for," Mr Furuta said.

Although its three basic aims — abrogation of the current defence treaty with the US, protection of Japan's peace constitution, and an economic policy that focuses on people rather than business — have not changed in 50 years, the JCP is seen as having softened its position and committed itself to parliamentary democracy.

It distanced itself from Moscow and Beijing in the 1980s and abandoned the goal of proletarian revolution more than 20 years ago.

News in brief

Swiss decry claim of Jewish 'slave camps'

SWITZERLAND rejected as "outrageous" yesterday allegations that it treated Jewish refugees like slaves in forced labour camps during the second world war. It was responding to a highly critical historical report compiled for the Simon Wiesenthal Centre which was released on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Austrian art curator Rudolf Leopold, who is fighting to win back a painting by the Austrian expressionist Egon Schiele impounded in New York, says 16 other works once owned by the same Holocaust victim are hanging in homes and museums in the US. At issue for government investigators is whether the victim and another Jewish owner of a Schiele were forced during the Nazi era to sell the works. — *Agencies, Zurich and Vienna*

Sheikh's wife helps accused

THE wife of the president of the United Arab Emirates has denied \$20,000 to a French writer on trial for claiming that the Jews exaggerated the number of people killed by the Nazis.

Sheikha Fatima, wife of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, gave the money to the defence fund of Roger Garaudy, aged 84, who is being tried in Paris on charges of contesting crimes against humanity. If convicted, he faces a one-year prison term and a fine of up to 300,000 francs (\$30,000).

In a book in 1988 he accused Jews of inflating the number of Holocaust victims to increase world support for Israel. He wrote to Sheikha Fatima saying the donation had "raised his confidence". — *AP, Dubai*

Anorexic princess flees

SWEDEN'S Crown Princess Victoria, who is suffering from anorexia, has gone to the United States to escape the limelight at home and study, the palace said yesterday. The 20-year-old princess had originally intended to continue her studies in Switzerland. — *Reuters, Stockholm*

Skinheads fail to box clever

HARASSMENT by skinheads of a group of foreign boxers training in the Baltic Sea peninsula of Usedom in north-east Germany has led to clashes, police said yesterday. Cuban boxer Juan Carlos Gomez hit one skinhead who was racially insulting him in a billiard hall last week, police said. Several skinheads also followed a car driven by the wife of Romania's Michael Loewe. When the boxers found skinheads waiting outside their hotel, one punched a skinhead in the face, the German sports news agency SID reported.

Meanwhile, a German parliamentary committee began an inquiry yesterday into neo-Nazi activity in the army following a string of embarrassing revelations last year. — *Agencies, Zinnwitz and Bonn*

Narrow escape for governor

THE governor of Russia's Sverdlovsk region, once the power base of President Boris Yeltsin, escaped unhurt after a bomb exploded near his car yesterday, local officials said. Eduard Rossel's press service said in a statement that an explosive device went off on his route from the airport to Yekaterinburg, capital of the vast industrial region in the Ural mountains. — *Reuters, Yekaterinburg*

Mass suicide bid investigated

A TEAM of German detectives was due in Spain yesterday to investigate whether a suicide attempt on the island of Tenerife by a suspected terrorist was linked to a similar attempt in Hamburg. Spanish police said last week that they had foiled the suicide attempt by 32 followers of the German psychologist Helmut Fittkau-Garthe. A police spokesman in Hamburg said if children had been involved there could be charges of attempted murder or manslaughter. — *Reuters, Hamburg*

Malays face bitter truth

THE Malaysian health ministry announced plans yesterday to launch a "Less sugar, please" campaign in an attempt to cut the country's sugar imports by half. The health minister, Chua Jui Meng, said said reduced consumption would help the economy, as well as improving health. — *AP, Kuala Lumpur*

Ali surfaces in Morocco

THE former world boxing champion Muhammad Ali, trembling from Parkinson's disease, arrived in Morocco yesterday for a three-day visit at the invitation of King Hassan. "King Hassan recognises Muhammad Ali as a very important Muslim. He is here to pray with the king as well as for the charity and philanthropic work that he does," Ali's spokesman said at a news conference. — *Reuters, Casablanca*

Love row ends in bus blast

A MAN who set off a home-made bomb in a bus in Seville in an attempt to kill his ex-lover and her husband injured himself and the couple, authorities said. The explosion, on Tuesday night, caused alarm initially when it was feared it might be the work of the Basque separatist group ETA. — *Reuters, Seville*

A warm welcome for FSA

Its first job must be to restore public confidence

HOW, asked the Opposition, would a food standards agency have been able to anticipate BSE? It was a crucial question on the day the Government launched its plans to provide consumers with more protection. Remember, no-one knew even the most basic facts about BSE in 1990: what caused it, how widespread it had become, how to diagnose it or the length of the incubation period. Remember, too, that mad sheep disease (scrapie) had existed for 200 years without spreading to cattle.

So what could the new Food Standards Agency (FSA) have done? A host of things as an agency with a remit to protect consumers. First, it could have been sceptical of new intensive — and offensive — farming methods. Did it really make sense to turn natural herbivores (cows) into meat-eating animals feeding them minced up meat ends and chicken litter? Worse still, what on earth were farmers doing feeding them minced up mad sheep? And even worse, why didn't this stop with the first reports that scrapie had jumped species to antelope and farm-reared mink which had received similar foodstuffs? Even if, like the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF), the FSA had slept through this catalogue of errors, once the disease had jumped to cows, it clearly had a decade ago — then it could have been sounding every alarm about the threat to humans. The fatal delays in making mad cow a notifiable disease, removing beef off from baby food, and banning it from sausage, burgers and pies could all have been avoided.

There are three reasons why the FSA is needed: the steep rise in food poisoning; the loss of public confidence in ministerial assurances about food safety; and an agriculture department which puts farm producer interests way ahead of consumer safety. BSE followed a litany of MAFF failures: salmonella in eggs, listeria in cheese,

mercury in fish, alar on apples. Food poisoning tripled in the 1980s and has continued to rise to a record level in the 1990s, capped by the world's worst outbreak of E coli poisoning in Scotland. As MPs noted yesterday, up to 75 per cent of the public have declared their lack of faith in ministerial assurances. MAFF was indicted by its own sorry record.

FSA will be a new independent agency with sweeping powers over food safety and hygiene. Its remit includes setting new standards for all parties in the food chain (farmer, producer, processor, distributor and retailer), monitoring food surveillance and law enforcement, regulating food labelling, and advising ministers, industry and consumers. For once Jack Cunningham, the Agriculture Secretary, could not be accused of hyperbole. This is the most radical move in food hygiene for a century. It will make food surveillance much more open. Remember, none of the 945 out of 919 abattoirs which fell way below hygiene standards under the old system, were ever publicly identified. The rave response last night from consumer groups, public health organisations, and the Meat and Livestock Commission were well deserved.

Ministers rightly resisted pressure from less progressive parts of the food industry to water down their original plan. Consumers will be given advice on nutrition and food storage. Indeed, one reason for the rise in food poisoning is cultural. Unlike America, Britain moved from a larger society to a micro-wave nation without a decent period of refrigerated civilisation to teach people about the dangers of chilled foods. Only the Food and Drink Federation made a fool of itself describing the contribution which the industry must make to the cost of the new agency as a "food poll tax". Restoring public confidence should be its first priority.

The Dome of rediscovery

Forget the diversions: it is telling us about ourselves

THE Millennium Dome is not yet up, but already it seems afflicted with a jinx. Barely a day goes by without a cock-up, row or gaffe related to the big top now under construction in Greenwich. In the last few days, we've seen the resignation of lead designer Stephen Bayley — irritated by the allegedly dictatorial ways of the Dome Secretary, Peter Mandelson, and fearful that the entire project might turn out to be "crap" — a rumour over its Christian content and angry claims that the Britishness of the exhibit is to be diluted by the presence of Japanese industry.

The sensitivities of survivors of Japanese labour camps cannot be waved aside. They are distressed that the Prime Minister used his trip to Tokyo to invite contributions to the Dome from the likes of Toyota, Sony, Nissan and Toshiba. Their leaders point out that several Japanese firms used British prisoners of war for slave labour, and that they should hardly be honoured in an exhibit celebrating the best of British. No-one wants to insult these men, whose sacrifice helped preserve the twentieth century for freedom and democracy. Still, it's hard to see how the Government could really accommodate their objections. We made our peace with Japanese industry's war-time record when we welcomed the location of their plants in our country.

Nor can the broader complaint — that it's unpatriotic to have foreigners under the Dome — really stand up. Mr Mandelson's view that companies like

Toyota are now "part of the British way of life" is actually quite sound. If you're one of the 100,000-plus employees of the 250 Japanese manufacturers investing some £25 billion here, you probably think Japanese business plays quite a big part in British life. The UK car industry — certainly part of our national landscape — is now heavily Japanese. It would be a collective act of self-delusion to shut them out of an exhibition about us — and a failure to recognise that the world has changed. No longer are nations islands unto themselves, sealed off from the rest of the planet — not even island peoples like ourselves and the Japanese. Our economies are mixed with each other, a trend that in the coming millennium will become more marked still.

A similar shift of perspective might be helpful with the content of the Dome. Conservatives and clerics have demanded Christianity be the central theme of the Greenwich exhibit. After all, they say, the anniversary of Jesus' birth is what it's all about. Technically they may be right, but the millennium plays on other passions just as keenly. As Terence Conran has said, "its appeal derives from a mix of superstition, numerology, science fiction and the like." The exhibit should reflect the fact that Britain, like the world, has changed — becoming a richer, more ethnically diverse nation. There's good logic for the Dome celebration — the Government needs to articulate it — and, just as important, stick to it.

Changing step for boy soldiers

Clare Short is quite right to lobby for a new age limit

THE WORD infantry may have derived originally from youth being used as foot soldiers; the little drummer boy may be an affecting image; but nowadays we expect our children not to be exposed to military influences at such an early age. The idea of boy and girl soldiers toting automatic weapons on the battlefield is repugnant. Reports yesterday that Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, is lobbying to end the recruitment of under-18s to the armed forces, pose an important question: what is the right age?

The argument for early recruitment goes as follows. The armed forces are a career which some young people wish to pursue: service training should be regarded as just another form of further education, available for school leavers at the usual age. The army's new Foundation College which starts in September with an initial intake of 600 has been designed to do just that. The

normal induction of 17-year-olds is no different from the system when national service was in operation. The use of boy soldiers on the battlefields as young as 11 or 12 in Zaire or Liberia — the comparison which disturbs Ms Short — is something very different.

But it is not quite so simple as that. 17-year-olds in the army are lumped together with older recruits and receive no special treatment. They may be deployed in Northern Ireland, although they are confined to barracks until 18. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets a minimum age for recruitment of 15 — but Unicef is lobbying for this to be raised to 18.

Yesterday the MoD was dismissing this as a little inter-departmental tiff. It is rather more serious than that. Soldiering is not the same as carpentry or plumbing, and the moral implications which it raises for young people need more careful thought.



Letters to the Editor

A diplomacy lesson for Mr Cook

SO ROBIN Cook plans when I practised family law? If Mr Cook indeed plans a "swift divorce" he would do well to do all in his power to ensure Mrs Cook's co-operation and moving his mistress into his official residence with a haste which could be regarded as unseemly and humiliating to his wife of 28 years may not be designed to encourage this. I hope he is better at international diplomacy.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that whether or not this happens in less than five years lies entirely in Margaret Cook's hands. As far as one is aware Mr Cook has no grounds on which to start divorce proceedings against her.

Under the current state of English law one cannot bring proceedings on the basis of one's own adultery (a fact which seemed to surprise

more than one client of mine when I practised family law).

Mr Cook's love life has been a scandalous invention of the tabloid press, they should all consider why the story has refused to go away. In the same way that they are keen not to repeat the Sun with their views on the single currency, New Labour seem anxious not to incur the wrath of the Daily Mail regarding the sanctity of the family.

Tony Blair has never pushed the family values line, but he has also never allowed us to feel he is comfortable with the idea that extended families, divorce and lone parenting are now an accepted way of life. Until he does, politicians and their sex lives will continue to attract interest and readership.

Alan Duncan, 26 Greenwiche High Road, London SE10 8LF.

THE "Cook Affair" has only served to make me realise how the cynicism that took root amidst Tory hypocrisy and sleaze is being further compounded by Labour's attempts at news manipulation (eg the Harman-Humphreys Affair). I find myself doubting whether anything is not spun, even to the point where I wonder whether some fixer told Robin Cook that he had to either stay with his wife or divorce and marry Ms Regan in order to keep his job. It is said to doubt another person's feelings and I am sorry for the hurt those involved must feel, but I hope that those to blame for my cynicism — the people obsessed with control and presentation — take heed of the "message".

Alan Duncan, 26 Greenwiche High Road, London SE10 8LF.

In the name of the father

HOW nice to see that Toby Young's Daddy has written in defending him (Letters, January 13). Where I come from we tend to think it a bit demeaning to have our parents fight our battles, but then Toby (that name alone) always was a middle class ponce through and through. Neither Toby nor his father was there in Marks & Spencer that day when Sasha, who had great regard for, said what she said. I do remember going straight to my husband and telling him about it. I was very cross with her, I remember.

Now, of course, I know she was right. Julie Burdill, c/o Simpson Fox, 52 Shaftsbury Avenue, London W1.

Poverty line

YOU report (New Job for Straw's wife, January 14) that Alice Parkins, wife of the Home Secretary, is to receive a Civil Service salary starting at £75,210. The same issue also carries an advertisement for the chief executive of the Princess of Wales Memorial Fund at a salary of £75,000. I do not understand how any one with a genuine commitment to abolishing poverty and promoting greater equality can accept incomes of this amount.

In regard to the Memorial Fund, it will reinforce one of the worst features of charity where the socially needy are demeaned by receiving goodies from the rich. Bob Holman, 18 Finlary Street, Easterhouse, Glasgow G34 0AD.

Direct e-mail

YOU point out (School pupils to receive free e-mails for life, January 13) that "part of the message screen (will be used) for advertising".

Signing up for this "free service" will, therefore, equate to providing consent to receive direct mail "for life", at "home... college, workplace". Will the "clear code of practice" envisaged by the National Association of Headteachers stress every individual's existing legal right, by virtue of the Data Protection Act, to put a stop to the receipt of unwanted direct mail. Freddy Kooten, CAP Gemini UK PLC, Cap Gemini House, 25 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2EG.

Road rage

THE Government this week announced spot fines for people cycling on the pavement, which effectively bans children from cycling in cities. Last week the price of travelling by Tube in London increased by 6 per cent, and a few days ago the Government announced another large subsidy for uncompetitive car production in Britain.

This all coincides with the release of a report by a government health committee saying that up to 24,000 people may be dying every year as a result of poor air quality. I then hear Michael Meacher saying that the Government is addressing the problem of air pollution by having an "integrated transport policy". We are "encouraged" to use public transport, walk and cycle to alleviate traffic levels, says Mr Meacher. Yet his government continues to keep our public transport system the most expensive in the world, and does nothing to address road safety issues other than to conduct an absurd discussion on whether motorists can have a whole pint, a half or a lager shandy before they kill you. Traffic junctions are still designed to favour motorists, and the DoT continues to run Red Routes through London.

The message is, to use a



favourite New Labour expression, "absolutely clear", drive. Peter Rapp, Flat 9, 21 Hamilton Park, London N5 1SL.

MICHAEL Meacher's comment and your leader on the thousands of deaths caused by traffic pollution (Choking on urban air, January 14) give welcome recognition to the multiple benefits of walking in tackling this problem. With the exception of an unfortunate minority of halitosis sufferers, pedestrians produce no atmospheric pollution. Walking also has huge health benefits — it has been described as "the nearest activity to perfect exercise". And walking journeys are integral to almost all public transport trips. Improved walking conditions would most benefit those who rely most on walking — low income households, older

people, children and women. Given these benefits, your leader's prescription to Mr Prescott should have included one further item — dramatic improvements in the appalling conditions faced daily by pedestrians, from cracked flagstones to a lack of consideration of walking journeys in transport planning.

They have lots of rich friends too, so this means the Three Bs (Blair, Blunkett and Byers) will be able to cut down on class sizes in state schools at a stroke. That will be one election promise they have carried out, I suppose. Nigel Molesworth Jr., Downwith Skool, aka Michael Hendy, 5 Hall Crescent, Sawston, Cambridge.

Blame the home, but not home videos

IN YOUR story (Film violence link to teenage crime, January 9) on last week's Home Office report on research into possible links between video and violence, you state that the report suggests "a link between video violence and criminal behaviour".

The report suggests nothing of the sort. It contains no evidence whatever of a cause-and-effect link between videos and violent offenders. What the report does show is that the critical element in the violent offender is the home environment.

Violent homes create violent criminals, not videos or TV; home video in Britain is pre-censored — unlike TV,

radio, the theatre or newspapers. There is nothing in the Home Office report to support any further restrictions on what is already Britain's most tightly regulated home entertainment industry.

Finally, your report refers twice to the Jamie Bulger murder. You should be aware that any link between that dreadful crime and video existed only in the minds of the tabloid press and the trial judge.

The Minister of State at the Home Office told the House of Lords on June 14, 1994, that "police reports did not support the theory" of influence in this case "by exposure either to any particular video, or to videos in general, and no

evidence about the role of videos was presented." Laurie Hall, Secretary-General, Video Standards Council, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 4SE.

UCY Ward (Straw "bowing to parental vote" over sex video rules, January 13) repeats the unsubstantiated claim that "videos featuring long close-up scenes of penetration and oral sex" have been passed by the BBFC for sex shops. No such close-ups have ever been passed by the BBFC. Mike Bor, Principal Examiner, British Board of Film Classification, London W1V 6HD.

A very British talent hidden beneath the Dome

IT would appear that the Millennium Experience has become a test of Peter Mandelson and Labour's marketing skills. For so long they have been selling us the package while giving no indication as to its contents. Now we discover that this "celebration of Britishness" will be in the shape of a large chunk of the Cairngorms, has been lost to a foreign landowner. All for the sake of a few hundred thousand pounds.

The £750 million set to be wasted on this monument to consumerism (ie the Millennium Dome sustainable development?) could have rescued vast amounts of our natural heritage and left a real and

lasting asset for future generations. Brian Blesse, 20 Days Road, Swanage, Dorset BH19 2JP.

THE British have a rare talent for putting on large, interesting festivals and events. I suggest that Mr Mandelson should disregard Disneyworld and Japan, and ask the opinion of a farmer from Somerset. Henry Lawrence, The Mall House, Brockham End, Bath BA1 8EZ.

Class war

NOT only teachers like the plummeting down of the Krikorian (Teachers welcome new emphasis on three Rs, January 14). We pupils are also highly chuffed about the Literacy and New Mersey Owers, as we will spend less time on sissy art and the boring Chew Doors.

But that sweet Fotherington-Thomas, who has a sister called Fiona and nose all about fionics, is not happy. He is absolutely wet and a weed and he wants to have more lessons to study clouds and flowers. Ugh! His parents, who are filthy rich, say if Christ Woodenhead is going to cut down on learning in this way, they will send their little darling back to the Prep.

They have lots of rich friends too, so this means the Three Bs (Blair, Blunkett and Byers) will be able to cut down on class sizes in state schools at a stroke. That will be one election promise they have carried out, I suppose. Nigel Molesworth Jr., Downwith Skool, aka Michael Hendy, 5 Hall Crescent, Sawston, Cambridge.

YOURS apologies to footballers Carlton Palmer and Ken Monkou over a mix-up with a photograph caption suggests that John Motson is jumping at the Guardian. I think we should be told. Jack Critchlow, 73 Sherwell Hill, Torquay TQ2 6LX.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address.

A Country Diary

DUREAM UNIVERSITY BOTANIC GARDEN: A warm breeze swept up last year's leaves and carried them skywards in a whirling wind devil, to the top of the cyresses on the conifer lawn. The unseasonably mild start to the year has brought spring to the garden, two months early. Snowdrops are in flower, honeybees have been seen in the hellebore flowers and frogs have come out of hibernation. The rhododendron damocron in the peat garden, which almost always pays a penalty in frost-scorched flowers for its precocious blooming, is covered in a mass of immaculate deep pink flowers carried on bare twigs. Swallowing willow catkins are beginning to force their way out from under their bud scales, mashaia blossoms seem the air in one sheltered part of the garden and which hazels are on the verge of flowering too — all just one week into the new year. There is always an un-

business that goes with a false spring — born of a near certainty that we will pay for it in due course — but for now Michael Hughes and his small team of gardeners have taken advantage of a break in the wet weather to prepare a site for a new planting of a collection of ornamental cherry species. They've chosen a spot sheltered from the winds by birches and tall beeches, where the cherries will be planted around a small depression, so that their petals will fall straight to earth and sit in a pink pool under the trunks in spring. First, though, they had to disconnect an old water supply that runs through the site. When I bumped into them they'd just found the buried pipes, using the most ancient of methods — dowsing, using divining rods cut from the hazel coppice where they were now excavating the buried hydrant, under decades of accumulated leaf litter.

PHIL GATES

Diary

Matthew Norman

WITH each hour that goes by, we become more confused about the background to Paul Rountledge's biography of Gordon Brown. Last Thursday, you may recall, we spoke to Gordon's jovial press man Charlie Whelan, putting to him the rumour that, at a Sunday Times Christmas party, he mentioned having seen and approved chunks of the book prior to publication. This Charlie denied, admitting cooperation but adding "the real world doesn't work like that". You will understand our bafflement, then, on seeing in the Scotsman an interview with Mr Rountledge. In it, he denies speaking directly to the Chancellor about the touchy issue of the leadership battle that never was, explaining that Gordon directed him to Nick Brown, the now Chief Whip who would have run his leadership campaign and there been one. However, Mr Rountledge does admit that he allowed Charlie to look at sections of the book "simply to verify facts". Quite how many sections Charlie saw, and how large those sections were remains a matter of mystery. Will no one allow us access to the whole story, if only to verify the facts?

MEANWHILE, there is shock news that Mr Rountledge is soon to face a challenge. A second biography of Gordon Brown, untitled as yet, is currently being written by Hugh Fynn and Nick Koshan, authors of a book on the Chinese serial killer, and will be published in July. This one, it seems, will be even less authorised than the Rountledge effort, although we believe Gordon did find time to meet Mr Koshan in long talks on his holiday last summer. Mr Koshan cannot comment on this, nor on rumours of a big-money serialisation deal with the Sunday Times.

TWO pensioners from Hampshire have suffered disappointment after travelling 100 miles from Portsmouth to Caversham. The couple set off to the headquarters of Thames Valley Radio, it seems, after hearing a commercial inviting listeners to visit the station's website.

A SINISTER twist to the conventional method of staff recruitment is being pioneered at the BBC, where interviews appear to have been jettisoned in favour of a more aggressive mode of examination. An applicant for the splendidly Birtan post of Assistant, Equality Unit passes on the letter of rejection. "It might be helpful for you to note that we could only select those whose application forms were completely unambiguous," states the letter, "and exactly matched our own specifications without further interrogations." What an entrancing self-portrait the Beeb continues to paint.

THE stellar career of my old friend Bernard Ingham continues to soar. Although he still eschews offers to become Diary Astrologer, Bernie continues to contribute regularly to the Sunday Telegraph magazine. "Thank you, Bernard Ingham," writes Psychic Pamith, once again in the entry for Arles, "for sending me a lovely crayon picture of the Sun entering Drama." (Not a liberty he would have taken, you suspect, when Mrs Thatcher relied so heavily on Kelvin's support, but we'll let it go.) "It really is delightful and I've put it on my office wall." Presumably out of embarrassment at being caught contributing to another paper Bernie again refuses to talk when we call, and upon mention of the words "Stargazer Psychic Pamith," the old boy instantly replaces his receiver.

ON the Pillar of Stone at Hong Kong University, a 28ft memorial to the Tiananmen Square massacre recently placed there, not one of the 50 writhing souls carved into it is recognisably Chinese. The explanation, writes the Fortean Times, is simple: Jens Galschiot, a Danish sculptor, made the statue to commemorate the Oklahoma City bombing. On learning that the US government had already commissioned a memorial, he gave it to Hong Kong.

GOVERNMENT WARNING: NOT EATING YOUR GREENS MAY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH. FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY

Stop the robots from running Westminster

Commentary

Hugo Young

THE House of Lords is not a private club. It is not a retirement home for gendeflex, nor a plush reward for services rendered. It should be more than a dropping-off place for MPs whom the people or the prime minister decide have no future. It is not an historic monument for the making of pretty, learned, wonderfully disinterested speeches. It is part of the legislature. It passes laws. It belongs to the nation, and is paid to do a job that ought to be important.

Lord Irvine's cabinet committee, which went to work on Lords reform this week, is discussing it as if it were half-way between a club and a monument, and the only thing that mattered was who lounged on the benches or patrolled the battlements. Club membership, at present, is all they care about. If they get no further than that, they will fulfil the caricature of New Labour, which says that modernising is essentially about appearances, as a mask for the

accumulation of power.

Power is where any consideration of the Lords must start. There are many questions to ask about the members. Should they be elected, half-elected, regionally representative, corporately selected, proportionately voted, or the status-quo commitment, after the hereditaries have been fired — prime ministerially nominated? But membership and its mode is consequential on power, and its availability. Power is the great issue that every official Labour spokesman refuses to address. It seems to me impossible to hold a rational discussion about any aspect of the second chamber while in such a state of denial.

At present, the Lords is a kind of power vacuum. It has certain powers, but the proof of its virtue is that it must never use them. When the old buffers vote against a Government bill, as they did this week on the London mayor, their entire legitimacy is rightly called in question. People as it now is, the Lords must not have power. It is required to be a eunuch, a condition imposed upon it with the same ferocity by it and the Labour majority in the Commons.

The Blair-Irvine plan will render this eunuch still more incapacitating. The faint bleedings of objection to current programmes will be

heard less often, and such votes as are available will result in more solid government support. That is the point of the reform: to abolish the Tory advantage built into hereditary membership. There may be some reformist attraction in despatching the hereditaries, a certain shrill modernity, but the real purpose is to touch political power, by ensuring even more firmly than is now the case that the pumpy powers the Lords do possess are reserved to challenge the executive-controlled majority in the Commons.

Any number of seductive arguments come forward to defend this intensification of the status quo. We hear what brilliant people are part of it, what learned discourses they have to offer, what excellent investigations they make, what a body of wisdom they shepherd optimism. Their very freedom from democratic connection, apparently, only adds to the sapience, the unique dispensation put at the service of the nation. But these, too, are masks for the question of power. The impotence of such wisdom, the fact that nobody who matters need pay the slightest attention to it and usually doesn't, is crucial to the rule it is allowed to play.

Whether or not you believe this situation should change depends on your attitude to power. Do you want an executive government that can do,

uninvigilated, whatever the Commons majority, which it screws into a robotic machine, will let it do? Are you satisfied with a parliamentary arrangement that sets no limits to power, even when constitutional rights are in peril? Is "strong" executive government, which means a government that can get its way quicker than any government in the democratic world, preferable to good slow-moving government?

An elected second chamber would certainly weaken government. It would take away power's certainty. Elected on a different system, with a different life-span, it would be quite open to a rival to the Commons. Without any increase in its present powers of delay, it would acquire a legitimacy that made these powers meaningful, and to a fast-moving executive branch, alarming. Possessing a new legitimacy, it might seek to increase its obstructive power: extend the de-

The rules of government have become too important to be left exclusively to the governors

lays, insist on constitutional guarantees. One should not pretend for a moment that, by re-arranging power, a new Lords would not radically alter government as we know it. I think the case for such a second chamber is strong. That's because I consciously want, in a general way, to make it more difficult for governments to act fast. This country strikes the balance heavily on the conservative side when it comes to changing systems, but entirely the

other way in respect of majoritarian government getting things done with minimum deterrence. The uninvigilated system that gave you the poll tax, numerous ill-drafted Finance Acts, the reckless cavalierism of the last decade, not to mention a scrutiny of European legislation which governments treat as a joke, has proved its dangerous incompetence over many years.

It's asking a lot of government to get it to take this analysis seriously. Proposing that ministers should see quality rather than quantity as the test of their decisions, and asking them to invent a reformed second chamber with enough legitimacy to force them to do that, is quixotically improbable. That's why Parliament, let alone the Irvine committee, can be left to do it. A reformed Lords would be a dire challenge to an unreformed Commons, a body so jealous of its interests that it will be quite incapable, fired up by a like-minded executive of taking the large view which this axiomatic question requires. It won't even get the right scale of debate started. The Commons is a body of taking the large view which this axiomatic question requires. It won't even get the right scale of debate started. The Commons is a body of taking the large view which this axiomatic question requires. It won't even get the right scale of debate started.

The power equation cannot be split down the middle. Either the Lords stays unreformed, save for heavier peopling by the friends of Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown. As such, it will hover between the continued ridicule and soothing admiration that are contingent on its impotence. Alternatively, it will be reformed into a body that raises and challenges parliamentary sovereignty.

Let's all worry about the end of the world



David McKie

FINANCIAL CHAOS. Leaving companies ruined, aeroplanes grounded in the sky or, still worse, falling out of it, as traffic-control systems crash; social-security systems in chaos, schools closed until further notice, hospitals out of action because vital machinery refuses to work... Maybe the 67 corporate and academic leaders who have written to Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and the Canadian premier Jean Chrétien warning of doom to come on January 1, 2000 are victims of some unusually selective version of mass hysteria.

But take what they're saying seriously, and this so-called millennium bug — or as we're no doubt now expected to call it, this Millennium Bug Experience — seems to me to constitute one of the strangest and most scandalous events of my lifetime.

If these terrible things are threatening us, why has it taken so long for an industry stuffed with the world's cleverest people, earning some of the world's fastest salaries, to wake up to impending disaster? It's not that the industry is lacking due warning. "There are lots of devices with little computers inside," an expert from the Institute of Electrical Engineers soothingly explained on Radio Five Live last September, "and the trouble is they may not respond to something unexpected like the millennium". Others may think that 2,000 years since what later came to be called AD 1 constitutes pretty generous notice.

Ask any bank or building society: they've had forewarnings of this kind of trouble already. My father-in-law was born in 1898. Computers don't want to know that. For a good while now computers have been refusing to handle any transaction involving him, on the grounds that anyone citing '98 as his age of birth hasn't been born yet. The most likely explanation, even if you're not paranoid, is that the industry knew, but chose to keep quiet.

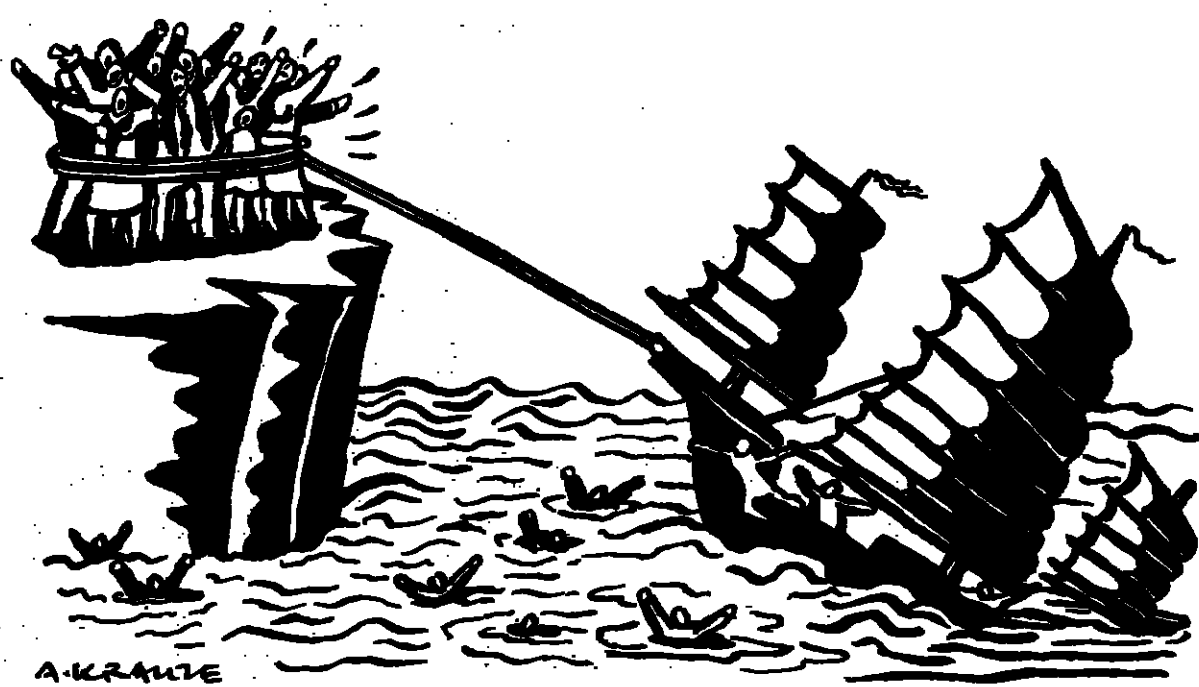
CHRISTINE Hobbay of Colchester, a programmer in a letter to the Guardian on January 6 that programmers were always under pressure to keep computer memories as limited as they could. "If we ever queried the fact that our programs would not run after the millennium," she wrote, "our doubts were always greeted by management with the reply: 'You surely don't

think that these programs will still exist in 2000'."

By commission or omission, anyway, someone has blundered. And yet there is not an outcry. The Millennium Dome Experience, which is likely to cost us perhaps a billion, is the subject of foaming controversy: yet where is the outrage over the £70 billion which on some expert estimates we are destined to pay for the Bug Experience? Where are the shuddering backbenchers, the stern select committees, the reigning trembling witnesses, the denunciations of editorial bile from the Times across to the Sun? Where are the calls for heads, some of them specified, to roll as some sign of penance? Where are the public confessions of guilt from former kings of the industry, parading technology in sackcloth and ashes and humbly offering repentance? It is almost as if the world has concluded that the horror threatened by the Millennium Bug is not (like the Dome) the product of human imperfections but some kind of Act of God.

AND in that sense the Bug Experience is uniquely apt for the celebration of a millennium. As the year 1000 approached, people feared devastation and doom of many kinds, from earthquakes and whirlwinds and objects other than aeroplanes falling out of the sky and all sorts of dread ingredients out of the Book of Revelations, right up to perhaps the most popular nomination: the End of the World itself. Among the rich and aristocratic, it was said, some were full of repentance, distributing their money and goods to minions whom before they had treated with cruelty and contempt; while others, though if the world was about to end they'd better have a good time while they still could. Still others more chastely celebrated the impending end of a wicked, unhappy time and the dawning of a more glorious one. But the pessimists, one imagines, outnumbered the optimists. They usually do.

On one level, what's feared today is the mutiny of the machine. All the gadgetry we have taken for granted, from lap-tops through mobile phones to electronics in the control tower, is plotting to turn upon us on January 1, 2000 on a scale far exceeding anything dreamed of by Spartacus. Yet this vision too, I expect we will shortly be told, may represent God's judgment upon us: on nations which can't lift their sights above the material, which idolise vain gadgets, which delude themselves into thinking you can buy yourself happiness at places like Dinos and Comet... Fertile territory this, for millenarians. Except that we need to remember this about all the dire scenarios furnished on every side as the year 1,000 years AD dawns: their close: none of it happened.



Watch that pension

As the Asian tigers tremble, Martin Woollacott warns that the fat years of easy takings by the West are over — and welfare schemes will suffer

MUSLIM rioters in Bandung smash the windows of Chinese stores, while in Saigon thousands watch the execution of businessmen charged with corruption. In Seoul foreigners fly in to buy, or buy into, whole firms that a few months ago they could only have dreamed of purchasing. In Tokyo, Japanese banks admit they have debts three times larger than previously admitted. As the Asian disease spreads, no wonder the Situation Room at the White House, normally used for meetings on the missile threat from Iraq or Nato ex-

panions, has become a forum for discussions of liquidity, loan exposure, and bail-outs. The world economic crisis has a dangerous symmetry. The solutions being sought to it could undermine both Asia's and the West's systems of work, welfare and social provision. This goes beyond the more general threat of a world recession. In East Asia, the welfare of ordinary people is assured by economic systems in which most benefits are delivered by firms. These can be big companies — state owned in China, private in Japan and South Korea — which provide not only employment but many other

forms of support. Or they can be small firms, protected by state barriers from competition whether domestic or foreign, like the corner shops of Japan. In South East Asia, in an inefficient and undoubtedly corrupt way, structures of patronage are also devised so that work and benefits are distributed to some extent among common folk.

In the West, most countries have systems in which the wellbeing of the population is secured by a combination of state action and that of companies ready to carry some social costs, but these systems are more and more undermined by private provision, particularly for pensions and health care. These systems, based on investments, many of these investments, to deliver the high returns needed to finance the high pay-outs promised, go to emerging markets, and in recent years very much to Asia. Tony Blair's new government, for example, is proposing to

make changes which, in order to concentrate state resources on the seriously poor and disadvantaged, will, by implication, much enlarge a middle-class private welfare system based on high returns on often foreign investments.

Yet what are we doing now? Asian societies are being urged to take action — have already taken it, in some cases — which will lead to the dismissals of thousands of workers and the closure of many firms, while preventing the additional government spending that might succour the victims. Right-wing American opinion condemns both "statist" and "crony capitalism" without accepting or understanding that these systems give work and other kinds of security to millions. At the same time many firms may pass out of national into foreign ownership. You could not imagine a much better recipe for political trouble, which in turn makes it more unlikely that, after a

short period of cherry-picking, Western banks and pension funds will ever again enjoy the returns to which insurance companies and pension funds had persuaded themselves they were entitled. That in turn will deliver a substantial blow to private welfare in the West.

IN THE last decade, three billion, mainly Asian, people have come into the global economy. The optimistic view was that this was a wonderful new wealth engine for the world of which the West could take full advantage. They would get much of the growth, while we would get a serious slice of the money, and some of this would be used to deal with the inevitable adjustments in Western economies as a number of our firms contracted or moved in the face of the competition.

The outcome has been different. Large overcapacity in the global economy which gives us, for example, a world automobile industry capable of producing 20 million more vehicles than there are likely customers. Manufacturing overcapacity was one of the reasons why so much recent Asian investment went into hotels, shopping malls, luxury housing and golf courses, predictably producing over-capacity in the services sector. Where could the money go to get the required returns? And, the most fundamental question of all, had we become addicted to rates of return that are not sustainable? The answer, it could only be offered by ignoring environmental and social costs, by ignoring Asia's need for massive infrastructure and anti-pollution investments, by chasing cheap labour on a slash and burn basis, or simply, by lying about the books? The latest from Asian capitals is that the exchanges are steady, and maybe the corner has been turned. Well, maybe. But there can be no going back to where we were before. The East-West symbiosis was based in part on false promises, and even where it was not, it has been damaged. It probably beyond repair by the way in which we have tried to solve the crisis.

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Just don't get found out



Yvonne Roberts

IT IS an ethical dilemma — with it. On Saturday, the London Scottish rugby football player Simon Fenn had a honp required 25 stitches. One of three men, Kevin Yates, Federico Mendez and Victor Uboga, playing in the front line for Bath, had to be guilty. Yesterday, under pressure, Bath officials belatedly decided to suspend Kevin Yates. He continues to maintain his innocence as have his two colleagues. Coming clean, of course, is never easy — particu-

larly in the public arena. Sadly, in the past few weeks, even those prophets of a fresh dawn in politics, New Labour ministers, have also begun to display an aversion to owning up. "I have sinned" were words rarely heard from the succession of Tory MPs who died while they leached during John Major's back-to-basics shambles. Alan Clark may have admitted to being "economical with the actuals" but in this, as in other areas, he was out on his own.

If, for instance, the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, had been frank about his domestic affairs months ago, arguably he wouldn't be caught in such quicksand now. At the weekend, we learned that either Chancellor Gordon Brown or the Blessed Blair, (his packaging already damaged by the tobacco sponsorship fiasco), is being less than honest about the decision to run

for the Labour party leadership. According to Brown's biographer, Paul Rountledge, Blair allegedly ratted on his friend by refusing to stand aside. Blair denies the charge. Brown stays mute. One or both has failed to come clean.

The irony, of course, is that *men culpa* has its own advantages. In the 70s and 80s it had a tremendous vogue, with the accent more so men than culpas. Nixon made his apologies over Watergate, a dozen American evangelicals confessed to drinks/drugs/womanising and went on — purged and purified — to discover nations and millions of dollars. Even Edwinna Carrie had her moment. In 1989, a few months after her resignation as health minister when she uttered those fatal words, "Most of the egg production in this country sadly, is now infected...", she toured the

country, cashing in on confession, plugging her book, *Life Lines*.

Fifteen months ago, Frances Lawrence, the widow of the murdered headmaster, Philip, launched her crusade to bring back a sense of civic duty. "A new mood of moralism," ran one headline. But if what Disraeli termed "the temper of the times" is for openness, less sleaze, more honesty — then how do we create a culture of contempt which damns those public figures whom so often short-change on the truth?

IN 1946 anthropologist Ruth Benedict wrote *The Chrysanthemum and The Sword*. Benedict was among the first to observe that much of Japanese behaviour was inhibited by the avoidance of shame. Shame being influenced by the notion of conformity to the community's standards. In contrast, Americans, she believed, were motivated by guilt, a morality customised to suit the individual. In the 1990s, shame exercises almost no

influence at all on the behaviour of those in public life (Jonathan Aitken? Neil Hamilton's metamorphosis into a celebrity?). While guilt can be too easily erased by self-serving justifications. Take, for instance, OJ Simpson's recent remark that if he had killed his wife, it would have been because he loved her death for her own good.

As the New York Times recently argued, "... the orientation is less about doing right than avoiding blame." At the same time, by refusing to accept blame, a perpetrator (one of Bath's three front-line players for instance) also desists from taking responsibility for his actions — and the corrosion of the consensus on standards gathers apace.

Shame has huge disadvantages when interpreted too harshly — guilt can be equally savage in its capacity to destroy. But should we take pride in a society in which prominent men and women act as if the only true virtue lies in "getting away with it"?

Analysis The millennium bomb

Sell-by date for the century

The double zero at the end of the millennial date spells apocalypse very soon, and for some firms it may already be too late. By Chris Barrie, Simon Beavis and David Rowan

YOU know the story by now. Computer programmers from the 1960s to the early 80s see a simple way to save computer memory, and hence money, by reducing any dates in the program to the last two digits. All goes smoothly — with 1975 painlessly becoming 75, 1983 becoming 83 — until one small event that ought, really, to have been foreseen. When the digital clock hits midnight on December 31, 1999, it confronts a year coded as 00. It assumes that this also begins with 19 — and acts accordingly. Supermarket computers reject checks that appear a century past its sell-by date; oil-tanker engines shut down, deciding that they cannot arrive 100 years before they set out; pension-plan investors find their nest eggs reduced to 1900 values.

Apocalypse very soon — and one which our political leaders still appear not to have fully grasped, according to the experts' regular warnings of doom. This week it was the British-North American Committee of business leaders and academics, who wrote to governments in Britain, the US and Canada about their "acute concern" that our leaders were not doing enough to ensure computers "comply" with the year 2000. Last week it was Robin Grier, executive director of the government-appointed Taskforce 2000, warning the Prime Minister that "we are getting it wrong. If we continue to do so, the harm to the economy will be substantial and the lives of millions of people will be unnecessarily damaged." A month earlier a consulting group warned of "severe disruption" as only around half of British companies were fully aware of the problem.

But there is a solution, as computer consultants and programmers are finding to their glee: at the right price, businesses can buy the expertise they need. Cap Gemini, Europe's largest computer services company, estimates the eventual bill in Britain to be some £23 billion — and that small organisations will need to pay £200,000 on average, medium-sized ones £400,000, and large ones £2 million.

British Telecom alone expects to spend £300 million, in a project that involves rewriting 300 million lines of

code. Indeed, companies will be budgeting so much to solve the problem that there will simply not be the supply to meet their needs. System House, an industry newsletter published by Richard Holway, says it will be impossible for British companies to spend more than £15 billion — as further resources will not be available. Cap Gemini says demand for information technology (IT) staff to fix the problems will exceed supply after this April.

The money does not go wholly to consultants: much of it is needed for raising awareness throughout organisations, establishing an in-house inventory of what needs attention, and eventually testing the new system. But the outside IT specialists and "change consultants" will command a high proportion. It can cost about £1 to change a line of program code — and a medium-sized company might typically rely on 15 systems (from payroll to mailing lists) with perhaps 5,000 programs using 12 million lines of code. A complete year 2000 compliance project might take 50 programmers almost three years; that is why the experts are warning that even now action may be too late. For this company the cost would be some £15 million. Of course, as with all demand-led operations, the market price can go up — and up even further.

THE IT industry has perhaps not helped itself by failing to define precisely the scale of the problem: millions of people will be unnecessarily damaged. A month earlier a consulting group warned of "severe disruption" as only around half of British companies were fully aware of the problem. But even then it has said the entire bill — when project-management costs, delayed upgrades, and litigation are added in — could be nearer £1 trillion. These are scary numbers — so huge that sceptics have used them to suggest that the computer industry is blowing the issue out of all proportion so it can make a fortune solving it.

Andy Kyte, Gartner Group's European research director, denies that the IT industry is exaggerating the problem in order to capitalise. In justification, he argues that the money spent merely "diverted spend"

The story so far...

In the days when computers could not store much information, programmers were under pressure to save valuable data space. Abbreviating four-digit year dates to two-digit ones (1978 to 78) seemed like a practical solution at the time. It has been known for a while that confusion would occur when 1999 rolls over to 2000. Many computer systems, software and programs that have been based upon the two-digit year date will understand the change to be 99 going to 00. It is easy to imagine the problems that this will cause.



For example, a computer which relies on two-digit year dates will see the interval between 1978 and 2000 not as 24 years but as MINUS 76, leading to calculation on the difference between 76 and 00.

Are you ready?

Percentage of work completed for critical applications, according to a 1997 UK survey

Health/healthcare	36
Finance	30
Manufacturing	28
Transport, utilities, other services	27
Government and public sector	25

The future

- In the air** IBM, which built the computers integral to air traffic control in the US, claims that they may not operate reliably when the date rolls over to January 1, 2000. Airlines may be forced to ground their fleets or cut services.
- In the hospitals** Up to 1,500 NHS patients could die in the first weeks of 2000 because of millennium computer failures, according to Prof Mike Smith, a doctor and computer expert.
- At work** New Year's Day in 1999 was a Monday; in 2000 it is a Saturday. Office computer systems that have not been fixed will be expecting us at work, although the heating and security systems might not operate correctly.
- Transport** Traffic lights and street lighting rely on date-dependent software. Oil tanker equipment could be affected.
- In the home** VCR video recorders may not tape anything in 2000. Other household gadgets with microprocessors could be affected.

Desperately seeking solutions

Change all date references in the lines of code, or databases records from four digits to two digits.

Force a permanent update. Some will insist that because of the program and the data systems, they will have to update all very time-consuming.

Embed the year information in a single line in the source code.

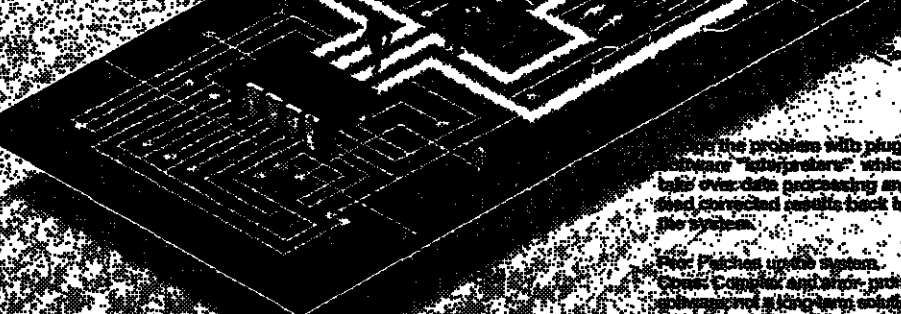
Force users to update. Some will insist that because of the program and the data systems, they will have to update all very time-consuming.

Update a copy of valid dates, eg 1999-2000.

Force the existing and old change. Some will insist that because of the program and the data systems, they will have to update all very time-consuming.

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If you haven't solved it by now... you are probably too late

...with the sum that would have bought new computer systems being used to fix some very old ones. There are those who argue that the year 2000 problem has been dressed up by consultants to make a lot of money. I can say categorically that is not true. For the IT industry, this problem is practically the same as cleaning the drains. They are having to say, 'I'm sorry we can't do any of this new, sexy development work — we've got to go and clean the drains.'

He does not deny that there are some big winners. Some IT specialists producing specific computer tools to fix the bug will certainly find a new market. But apart from that, no one set of professionals will cash in above all others. "The major winners of the year 2000 are going to be the lawyers. It is inevitable that a lot of disputes are going to end up in the courts."

The unprecedented costs shortage is pushing up costs to extraordinary levels. Even within the last 12 months,

firms have started to pay three to four times more for consultants and technicians who can solve the problem. Tales of poaching of skilled staff are rife; warnings have been coming in from leading firms that they will soon simply run out of trained people.

Many British firms lack the people to tackle the millennium bug simply because of their own efficiency goals. Having shed "excess" staff in the 1980s, companies no longer have any reserve to grapple with one-off problems such as reprogramming computers. Gary Miles, a director at PA Consulting, says his company's research suggests that industry is expecting to get half of the resources it needs from outside. For resources, read consultants.

His own company is already fully booked. Faced with such demand, he says companies such as PA have two choices. They can either embark on a recruitment campaign to train new consultants. Or they can batten down the

hatches and turn new work away until existing projects are completed — which is what PA has decided to do.

In contrast, Karl Chapman is prepared to take on anyone with the right aptitude and attitude. Irrespective of their working background, as chief executive of the CRT Group, an IT consultancy, Chapman let it be known before Christmas that his company wanted 2,000 recruits and would welcome teachers, the unemployed, or those who wanted to return to work after having children. His firm has received well over 10,000 applications, many of them of high standard.

UNLUCKILY Chapman's recruitment campaign is unlikely to make a serious dent in the skills shortage. The Computer Services and Software Association says there is a shortfall of 30,000 people out of a skills base of 800,000 people. And the shortfall will get worse as

demand increases. That is why the Prison Service has begun exploratory talks with computer companies like ICL, about using prisoners to fill the gap. Prisoners already carry out database work and, at £2 an hour, could prove much cheaper than conventional programmers.

However, Gary Miles says there is evidence that some consultants are indulging in business practices that some clients would regard as criminal. There is anecdotal evidence that consultants are exploiting firms' mounting desperation and gasping clients, trading one against the other in a ruthless auction for skills.

"People are cherry-picking," says Rob Wirszycki, director general of the CISA. "It is understandable. In a dinner we held recently for chief executives of IT firms, they came to the conclusion that competition to hire people was greater than for business."

Prevailing wisdom has it that smaller companies are those most likely to suffer

And it has already started

A supply of corned beef was rejected by Marks & Spencer's computer system because the sell-by date was post-2000.

A major TV company's contracts and payment system cannot cope with current expiry after 2000. It has to limit the expiry date to 31/12/99 or keep manual records.

ICSA, the furniture chain, closed its Warrington branch over Christmas, reportedly due to problems with its 700-expiring credit cards.

A multi-million-pound UK hospital body scanner would not work on February 29, 1999 because it couldn't handle leap years. 2000 is a leap year.

because of their inadequate reserves of manpower and finance. But Miles says this worry may be overdone. Small firms could not afford to buy the mainframes of the past; they bought PCs as the prices fell. Hence their technology tends to be newer and the companies less dependent on it. The most vulnerable companies are the bigger groups, such as high-street banks, entirely dependent on IT in handling millions of transactions.

Still, awareness of the problem is spreading fast. Where there is complacency within national governments, big companies are beginning to put real pressure on for a change of emphasis. The letter this week from leading industrialists and academics to Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and Jean Chrétien warned of the catastrophic effects the bug could have on private-sector business, financial services, important public services, travel and defence.

Next week the British Government will launch its own

millennium bug agency under the chairmanship of Don Cruickshank, the outgoing telecoms regulator. But observers still worry that complacency is still gripping all parts of the public sector. The Government is proving among those least prepared. Research for Cap Gemini shows that the public sector has completed only a quarter of the work needed to convert its computers, compared with 35 per cent for the retail and wholesale sectors. David Clark, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, estimates that the Government will need to spend £370 million to avoid the bug — and that does not include the NHS or local government.

Already some computer systems are failing to deal with the date change. Credit cards with a 00 expiry date have already been refused by ICSA stores. Firms trying to process deliveries of goods after January 1, 2000, will also begin to find that old systems do not do the job. It is a problem which will strike progressively between now and the turn of the century.

Then there will be the problem that will strike on the first day of the new century in an estimated 60 to 80 billion microprocessors in every type of mechanical device from domestic appliances to lifts, trains and planes. Andy Kyte laments the fact that the problem was originally labelled the "millennium timebomb". It is, he says, more like a hurricane. "We are currently feeling the first breezes. By next year the wind will be getting stronger and stronger until it reaches tornado force. By comparison, January 1 in the year 2000 will come almost as a relief."

Sources: (1) Defusing the Millennium Bomb, by PA Consulting (December 3 1997); (2) Cap Gemini Millennium Index (October 28 1997). **Graphs:** sources: Parliamentary Office of Science & Technology (Note 89); System House (Richard Holway Ltd); Taskforce 2000; Bar chart based on PA Consulting survey of December 1 1997. **Graphics:** Paddy Allen; Finbar Sherry. **Research:** Mark Espiner; Jane Crinion. **Simon Beavis and Chris Barrie** report on media businesses for the Guardian; David Rowan is Analysis page editor

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Finance Guardian

Nuclear lifeline severed

Paul Brown, Environment Correspondent

TWO blows were delivered to British Nuclear Fuels last night when the Environment Agency postponed decisions about granting licences to continue key parts of its operations.

The agency cast doubt on the commercial viability of BNFL's £300 million plutonium fuel plant. Then ministers said they were thinking of taking the decision out of the hands of the agency altogether and making a political decision on granting a radioactive-discharge licence for all of BNFL's plants at Sellafield, Cumbria.

The setback for the last state-owned industry comes shortly after the Government attempted to shore up BNFL by pushing through a merger with Magnox Electric, the company that runs the oldest of Britain's nuclear reactors. Ministers have admitted that the deal, which seems certain to block any prospect of priva-

... but MPs are offered a subsidy-free alternative

WIND, wave and solar-generated electricity will easily carry the government beyond its target to produce at least 10 per cent of the UK's power needs from renewable energy sources by 2010, according to one of the world's largest integrated natural gas companies, writes Colin Weston.

Executives of Enron, giving evidence yesterday to a House of Commons inquiry into energy policy, said no public subsidy would be needed for the power industry to expand the use of alternative fuels.

The executives estimated that up to three-quarters of the UK's alternative generation target could be met by

wind-turbine farms. Enron builds wind turbines and is keen to establish an offshore project.

Ralph Hodge, chairman of Enron Europe, said renewable energy sources would ensure that the UK did not become overly dependent on gas-fired power stations.

But he warned the trade and industry select committee that the Government's temporary ban on building gas-fired power stations would not protect the remains of the coal industry.

Mr Hodge called on the Government to lift the moratorium and warned that coal-fired power stations, and the deep mining industry, did not have a

long-term future. "There is a role for mixed fuel supply, for some years of coal and gas. That's about making efficient use of existing assets but it can be no more than medium-term."

One-and-a-half million cars would have to be removed from roads to compensate for the additional carbon-dioxide emissions produced in the life of each 1,000-megawatt coal-fired plant, even using "clean coal" technology.

"It is difficult to reconcile the UK's environmental commitments and undertakings with a policy which promotes reliance on higher carbon- and sulphur-emitting fuels in electricity generation."

titiation, could cost taxpayers at least £4 billion in liabilities and 2,000 jobs.

BNFL has always shown a profit on reprocessing contracts for foreign and UK utilities. Last year, the company made £216 million on sales of nearly £2.3 billion.

Agency officials were not convinced that the company had made a case that the

MOX (mixed oxide fuel) plant is commercially viable, even though it is completed and awaiting the licence.

The plant would take plutonium by conveyor belt from the adjacent £2.3 billion thermal oxide reprocessing plant (Thorp) and mix it with uranium to create new fuel for nuclear reactors. Plutonium would be re-exported to Japan

and Germany. MOX fuel is far more expensive, than uranium fuel, however, and detractors say there is no economic case for it.

For BNFL the MOX plant is crucial because the only justification for Thorp's existence is that the plutonium it produces has some use. Since the fast breeder reactor programme collapsed, MOX has

been BNFL's lifeline. Under European law, the company has to justify any new nuclear discharges as a public benefit. Exporting surplus plutonium produced through reprocessing spent foreign fuel would be unlikely to stand up to the legal challenges threatened by environmental groups.

The Environment Agency will start two new public consultation exercises as a result of yesterday's decision. It held one such exercise in January last year and appointed PA Consulting Group to advise on the economic case after objections were raised. The group's report will be made public on Monday and objectors will have another two months to make comments.

Notebook

IMF must say more than sorry



Edited by Alex Brummer

THERE was always going to be a point in the Asia crisis when the IMF, the sorting out the mess, would become an issue in itself. Until now the debate about the IMF's role has been somewhat rebarbative, with competing economists, from Jeffrey Sachs of the Harvard Institute to Joseph Stiglitz of the World Bank, attacking the Fund's value system and model.

The IMF is acknowledged for the first time that in the case of Indonesia, at least, it may have made fundamental errors. In its determination to clean up the banking system after it took control in November, it advised the government to close 18 unsound banks, including one controlled by President Suharto's son: stiff medicine. However, instead of stabilising the credit system in the country, as the IMF had hoped, that action triggered even greater financial panic, with depositors and investors removing a further \$2 billion in a flight for safety.

In a leaked internal report, Indonesia's Standby Agreement Review Under Emergency Financing Procedures, the IMF acknowledges that its actions provoked a much more broadly based run on the banks which resulted in two-thirds of deposits being shifted and the authorities having to pump in resources equivalent to 5 per cent of GDP to prevent systemic collapse. Ouch! This partly shows the high risks for the IMF, which is short on commercial banking knowledge and experience, in seeking to manage a capital market, as opposed to an economic crisis.

It is plain that when and if Asia settles down — which may take longer than Hong Kong's financial secretary, Donald Tsang, seems to think — the calls for institutional reform will come through fast and furious. A debate has begun already on Capitol Hill as to whether US money (actually, it is notional obligations rather than real cash) is being used properly in the region. The discussion has been joined by Belgian finance minister Philippe Maystadt, who as chairman of the policy-making Interim Committee of the IMF will play a critical role in shepherding through reforms.

Speaking in Manila, Mr Maystadt suggested that perhaps the IMF was slow to head off the Asian problem and failed to exert timely pressure for obvious reforms such as an end to overvalued exchange rates. At the same time, Mr Maystadt acknowledged that, if harsher public warnings had been given rather than gentle confidential briefings, the effect on confidence would have been less attractive.

Nowadays, a cyberpet is not just for Christmas

Pauline Springett

CHRISTMAS, it seems, is not what it used to be. Nowadays, after Santa struggles down the nation's chimneys on December 24, he carries on making deliveries until well into January, according to Gerry Masters, secretary of the British Association of Toy Retailers.

"The year didn't end at lunchtime on Christmas Eve," said Mr Masters, explaining that although most children still get their major toys on Christmas Day, many parents leave the purchase of less important presents until later.

"Bargain hunting is an influence," said Mr Masters. He thinks that the pre-Christmas frenzy is getting shorter, too. Mr Masters' comments came after Hamleys, the specialist toy seller, revealed

little different. What is clear is that the winter spring rush of financial gatherings, starting with the Group of Seven in London (February 21/22), are likely to be dominated by Asia and the role of the IMF and World Bank in particular. Despite all of Labour's efforts to make jobs the central issue, as is being demonstrated in Indonesia, the IMF does have the capacity for useful self-criticism. There will be some G7 members arguing, however, that the whole process could be improved if there were more transparency in the Fund's dealings with members. Openness is a global theme which appeals to the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, who will be in the chair at the G7 gathering.

Dixons dotage

WINDFALL gains, which were behind a mini-consumer boom in the spring and summer, have come back to haunt retailers such as Dixons, which has announced a drop in Christmas sales because of lower spending on big-ticket items.

That may mark the start of a difficult year, as a tough market for computers combines with a technology gap in television, made worse by the delay in launching digital broadcasting. But the difficulty will be relative, with the group still growing and building up cash.

The question is: Where Dixons goes from here? There is still growth in areas such as computers and digital television technology, when it arrives in force, and from the move out of town to supermarkets which have space to stock additional products such as fitness equipment. But in the electrical and electronic goods there is no prospect of Dixons being allowed to make a takeover in the UK. Foreign ventures beckon therefore, although chairman Sir Stanley Kalms has so far restrained his enthusiastic colleagues from following arch-rival Kingfisher on to the Continent.

Dixons has already burnt its fingers in the US, joining the ranks of failed 1980s British acquirers with the purchase of \$10, which was sold in 1993 after huge losses. So the Continent seems the obvious route for expansion, especially now Asia has become less attractive.

The group faces the usual problem of finding a company to buy, so it is likely to take some time. And continental growth will probably come as much from entering markets directly, especially with a format such as the PC World, as from acquisition.

In the longer term, as the euro smudges national differences, Dixons probably faces the prospect of confronting many leading British companies, that if it wants to be a significant force in the European market it will have to forge links with similar companies in other countries.

But that will probably be after the retirement of its energetic chairman, who at 86 shows no sign of wishing to take life easy.

Pay rises pile pressure on interest rates

Larry Elliott, Economics Editor

GOVERNMENT anxiety that tumbling unemployment will cause an inflationary spiral in pay awards was reinforced yesterday with the release of official figures showing earnings growth up for a second month.

News that average earnings in the year to November rose by 4.75 per cent sent tremors through the City and prompted speculation that the Bank of England's monetary policy committee will raise base rates at its meeting early next month.

The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, is now set to redouble his warnings that higher pay will lead to dearer home loans and is likely to adopt a tough stance in negotiations with Britain's five million public-sector workers.

Data from the Office for National Statistics indicated that the number of people out of work and claiming benefit dropped for the 12th successive month to 1,411,200 in December, the lowest level since July 1990.

The 26,800 fall in the seasonally adjusted jobless total brought the cumulative decline since unemployment peaked at the end of 1992 to 1,570,000.

The authorities believe that, after several years in which job insecurity kept a brake on pay, earnings are finally starting to respond to the brighter outlook for jobs.

ONS officials said increases in overtime and bonus payments pushed up earnings growth from 4.25 per cent in the year to September to

4.5 per cent in October and 4.75 per cent in November.

With productivity growing at just over 2 per cent, the rate of earnings growth is only just compatible with the Government's 2.5 per cent inflation target.

The Bank's minutes of its December monetary policy committee meeting — when rates were left unchanged at 7.25 per cent — said it was possible that despite the five post-election increases in base rates, the pace of economic activity was far too rapid for comfort.

"Policy might need to be tightened again quite soon if there were not clear evidence in the early part of the new year that the economy was slowing sharply."

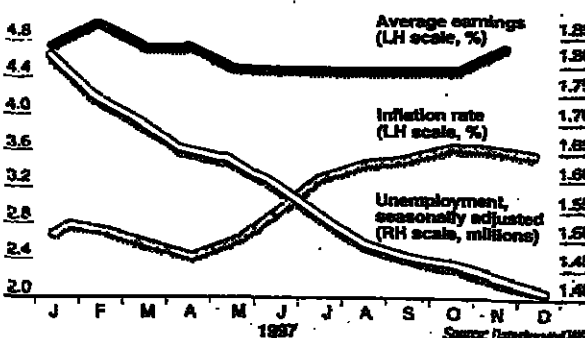
The minutes highlighted the growing problem of skills shortages for firms, particularly in the South. According to the latest ONS figures, the jobless rate in the South-east is 3.1 per cent, against a national average of 5.0 per cent, itself the lowest figure for more than 17 years.

In the second half of 1997, the number of unemployed claimants fell by an average of 31,400 per month, a picture mirrored by the Government's alternative method of calculating joblessness — the Labour Force Survey.

The LFS, which uses a yardstick drawn up by the International Labour Organisation to measure the number of people actively looking for work, found that unemployment fell by 150,000 in the three months to November.

Despite falling for the 19th quarter in a row, LFO unemployment remains 400,000 higher than the claimant-count total.

Triple whammy?



TUC says one in 10 workers is caught in contract trap

David Gow, Industrial Editor

ONE in 10 of British workers is being systematically denied basic employment rights because of being on short-term contracts, the TUC said in a report issued last night.

Make-up artists working on films like the Spice Girls' movie, growing numbers of bank staff, building workers and even college lecturers are denied compensation for unfair dismissal and redundancy. They get no pay for sickness, holidays or maternity leave, the TUC said.

Its report, Job and Go, shows that hundreds of thou-

sands of the 2.67 million short-term contract workers are hired on "zero hours" terms, which means they are called in only when needed and paid accordingly. Equally, short-term employees, normally employed by agencies and treated as self-employed although they pay tax via PAYE and national insurance, are often denied written terms and conditions.

The TUC said: "These workers have been caught up in the current fad for increasing flexible and fixed-term working. They are contracted for their services, often through an agency, as casual or seasonal workers, or for a fixed term, but not for permanent employment."



Cashing in... An Indonesian investor enjoys his bundles of rupiahs after converting his dollars. PHOTOGRAPH: UPALI ATURUGIRI

Rating agencies face legal fight

Asia in turmoil

Laurie Laird in London and Nick Cumming-Bruce in Jakarta

LADING rating agencies face legal action for not warning investors sooner of the risk of Korean and Indonesian bonds.

In an unprecedented move, the Fitch IBCA rating agency has admitted to mistakes in evaluating the economic position of South Korea.

Legal sources last night

said this could open the door to lawsuits against the agencies, particularly in the United States.

Agencies could be sued for negligence in not noting the region's economic problems more quickly. The rating of Korean debt, for example, went from upper-grade to speculative in less than a month, according to Moody's Investor Services, which says a further downgrade is expected.

Rating agencies provide disclaimers but a legal source said these may limit liability in a US court but not remove liability completely. Investment houses subscribing to rating agencies were

"buying a contractual service" and were entitled to a degree of accuracy.

British lawyers saw little chance of court action. They said a House of Lords ruling limiting the liability of auditors who misjudge the financial health of a company was likely to cover rating agencies.

A spokesman for Fitch IBCA played down the threat of action, saying the agency was protected by disclaimers. Asian markets rebounded sharply for the second successive session yesterday as investors sensed that all-Indonesia and Korea may reform their economies.

Key share indices in Hong

Kong and Singapore both jumped by more than seven per cent, while the Kuala Lumpur composite index was up by 5.4 per cent. Indonesia's benchmark led the gainers, leaping by 9 per cent to end at just under 404, while the rupiah also gained.

These gains came as International Monetary Fund managing director, Michel Camdessus, arrived in Jakarta to meet President Suharto to wrap up a deal, to be unveiled today, on the reforms Indonesia will undertake as the price of the fund's \$40 billion (\$24.6 billion) rescue package.

Wall Street to close for King holiday

Jesse Jackson takes on last white male bastion, MARK TRAN reports

THE New York Stock Exchange will close next Monday when it honours Martin Luther King's birthday for the first time as Wall Street comes under increasing pressure to become less of a white man's club.

Wall Street's observance of Martin Luther King Day coincides with a high-profile campaign by Jesse Jackson, the civil rights leader, to persuade securities firms to hire more members of disadvantaged groups and to do more busi-

ness with minority-owned companies. His initiative has received backing from the highest levels of government.

President Clinton, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan are all scheduled to address a fund-raiser organised by Mr Jackson that began yesterday at Windows on the World restaurant at the top of the World Trade Center.

Mr Jackson's latest campaign follows his success in

putting pressure on Texaco to settle the largest racial discrimination suit in history, when it agreed to pay \$176 million (\$110 million) last year. Mr Jackson believes that Wall Street is the final white male bastion.

"He views this as very much in the tradition of the struggle for economic justice that Martin Luther King began. This is a new Jesse Jackson. Jesse Jackson the capitalist," said David Willem, a senior managing director with Everen Securities in Chicago, who has consulted with Mr Jackson over the years.

Most big Wall Street firms

are participating in this week's meeting. Mr Weill, chairman and chief executive, has been the most active Wall Street figure in organising the events.

Wall Street's increased sensitivity to racial issues has been partly driven by legal action.

Last autumn, Smith Barney, now Salomon Smith Barney, a subsidiary of Travelers, settled a class action suit brought in a federal court by more than 20 women. The former and current employees claimed that the firm had taken no action while the workplace was rife with sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.441	France 9.979	Italy 2.879	Singapore 2.78
Austria 20.37	Germany 2.884	Japan 1.881	South Africa 7.94
Belgium 59.68	Greece 459.14	Netherlands 3.25	Spain 243.20
Canada 2.277	Hong Kong 12.26	New Zealand 2.75	Sweden 12.84
Cyprus 0.85	India 65.12	Portugal 11.98	Switzerland 2.35
Denmark 11.09	Ireland 1.154	Saudi Arabia 6.01	Turkey 393.580
Finland 8.851	Israel 5.82	USA 1.993	

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).

Racing

Savill pulls out of leadership race

Chris Hawkins reports on the fall-out from Lord Wakeham's shock resignation

PETER SAVILL ended intense speculation about his future ambitions at the British Horseracing Board yesterday when he ruled himself out of the race to succeed Lord Wakeham as chairman.

Savill, the principal architect of the BHB's financial plan which he launched at the organisation's annual forum, said: "When it became clear that Lord Wakeham's resignation was a possibility I made it clear to senior industry colleagues that I was not a candidate for succession."

"The only ambition that I've ever had in racing politics is to do my best to solve racing's financial problems and do what is best for the industry that I love."

Savill's decision probably leaves the way clear for the two most widely tipped successors, namely Christopher Spence, due to become senior steward of the Jockey Club in the summer, and BHB director Rhydian Morgan-Jones.

Savill, who put in a powerful performance in defence of the controversial plan, told

the forum: "I do not think Lord Wakeham's departure will jeopardise the success of the plan one bit. His resignation was absolutely the right decision both for the racing industry and himself."

"It should make it much easier now for us to get on with achieving our goals — there is no ambivalence about our approach."

The basis of the new plan is that an additional annual investment of £105m is needed to put British racing on a firm financial footing; the amount being made up of £50m from an increased percentage of horserace betting turnover and £55m from self-help initiatives.

Such an investment, it is estimated, would create over 9,000 new jobs, attract over 2,400 new owners and increase the horse population by around 3,400.

Savill argued that this investment would stimulate betting turnover by about £450m and increase direct Government tax revenues by more than £110m.

These incentives, particularly the latter, may convince the Government of the merit of the plan for there is no doubt British racing gets a raw deal in relation to the ratio of betting duty returned to the sport.

Overall the effect of this in this country is poor prize-money levels and an impoverished industry where those at the bottom are overworked and badly underpaid.

It is often argued that the picture of rich racehorse owners profligate the bigging bowl is obscene, but that is a simplistic view. It is staggering just how much owners are expected to contribute to keep the whole show on the road.

Of the £300m cost of racing in 1994, owners came up with £150m or 50 per cent, racecourses £80m, while the betting levy yield was £70m.

The percentage return to owners against the cost of keeping and training in Britain is 24 per cent and Savill wants to increase this figure to 50 per cent.

Taking up the cudgels on racing's behalf in Parliament yesterday was the Tory MP Laurence Robertson, who called for the Government to reduce betting duty.

"No one is asking for a handout or a subsidy," said Robertson. "All we are asking is that the Government stops taking such a large amount of money out of racing, especially when it treats other forms of gambling more leniently."

Racing has certainly built up a head of steam in recent weeks starting with Sheikh Mohammed's threat to reduce his interests, but it would be a miracle if the Government acceded to every wish.

Savill is not expecting that, but believes a position for negotiation can be established with progress being gradual.

Fitzgerald lands ride on Celibate

NICKY Henderson's stable jockey Mick Fitzgerald is free to ride Celibate, the 4-1 favourite for Saturday's Victor Chandler Chase at Ascot, following his trainer's decision yesterday not to run Big Matt, twice winner in 1994, was also described as "doubtful" for an alternative engagement on the same card.

Jonathan Lower will be come the first diagnosed diabetic to ride in this country when he partners 'Totally Yours' in a novice claiming hurdle at Wincanton today.

The jump jockey, who last year won a long battle with the Jockey Club to allow him to ride despite his condition, was about to resume riding in October when he suffered a broken leg in an accident on the gallops.

Lower, who was diagnosed with diabetes in 1994, has been unable to ride since then. He is now being treated by a specialist at the Royal Free Hospital, London.

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High Sierra... Sierra Bay on his way to victory at Folkestone

PHOTOGRAPH FRANK BARON

Wetherby programme

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FA Cup, third round

Replay: Aston Villa 1, Portsmouth 0

Milosevic adds to the turmoil

Martin Thorpe

DESPITE lacking a manager, a chairman and lots of money, beleaguered Portsmouth produced a performance of spirit and guts last night that will go a long way to lifting the mood at Fratton Park. Aston Villa were disappointingly sterile going forward but scraped through to a home fourth-round derby against West Bromwich Albion.

To say this has been a bad week for Portsmouth depends on how one views Terry Venables' way of doing business. Many at the club are pleased to see the back of him. Others are not sure what has been going on behind the scenes.

The whole of Fratton Park is in the grip of uncertainty. Although he resigned this week as chairman, does Venables have a claim to the 51 per cent shareholding he says he was promised? And when will he sign the agreement to sever all links with the club?

The lack of clear answers has promoted yet more uncertainty. Vince Wolarin, the American billionaire who says he has £90 million to inject into the club, insisted yesterday that he will not do so until Venables has definitely departed.

The loss of this lucrative lifeline would obviously be a serious blow to Portsmouth, sitting bottom of the First Division, losing more than £100,000 a month and in desperate need of a new life-support system.

With Venables also hinting that he may quit as Australia coach because of problems getting access to his players, one of the few indisputable facts to emerge from this week's saga is that Terry Venables no longer holds the post of Portsmouth manager.

Sacked on Tuesday, his No. 2 Keith Walden took temporary charge last night with the unenviable task of trying to lift a demoralised team. His optimism will have been tested on discovering that Villa had lost only one FA Cup replay at home in 66 years and denied on learning that Villa's joint leading scorer Dwight Yorke was back in the team after seven games out with a calf injury.



Hall way... Portsmouth's Jamaican winger, left, keeps Villa's central defender Seimcea guessing at Villa Park last night. PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL COOPER

On 21 minutes it was dealt an even bigger blow when Villa took the lead. Stan Collymore knocked on a pass to Savo Milosevic, who took the ball on his chest, pushed it past a defender and fired it past Alan Knight.

Spurred on by this early success, Villa twice went close to extending their lead. Collymore hit a post from 20 yards and Alan Wright hit the bar with a chip over the advancing goalkeeper.

But, if Portsmouth were losing self-belief, they had only to recall the first tie against Villa, when they had the better of the game only to see a famous victory snatched from their grasp through a sloppy goal conceded five minutes from time.

John Durrin, one of four changes to their side, shot just wide after being allowed to run in the Villa area and Mark Bosnich, quick off the line, produced a great save at

the feet of Robbie Pethick to prevent Portsmouth drawing level. However, Villa began the second half anxious to re-assess their Premiership authority and in the first 10 minutes they twice went close to increasing their lead. The saviour on both occasions was Portsmouth's veteran goalkeeper Knight.

First Ian Taylor on the far post knocked a ball back to Simon Grayson, whose shot

was instinctively parried by Knight. A minute later Mark Draper stole in on Milosevic's cross and saw the goalkeeper produce another reaction save.

Just past the quarter-hour, though, Pompey chimed in with another good chance to remind Villa how dangerous they could be. The left wing-back Lee Russell crossed to the far post, where the recalled and rejuvenated Durrin outwitted his marker Up

thigh to propel an acrobatic diving header against the upright. The score served to demonstrate to the home fans how fragile a 1-0 lead can be while acting as a source of encouragement to the 3,000 or so travelling Portsmouth fans.

Aston Villa (3-4-1-2): Bosnich; Ehiogu, Staunton, Seimcea; Grayson, Draper, Taylor, Wright; Milosevic, Collymore. Portsmouth (3-5-2): Knight; Whitbread, Anderson, Russell, McLoughlin, Foster, Simpson, Russell; Hall, Durrin. Referee: U. Rennie (Sheffield).

Football

Benfica make £1.2m swoop for Deane

Ian Ross

SHEFFIELD UNITED's former England striker Brian Deane will fly to Portugal this morning to complete a surprise transfer to Benfica.

Deane is to swap South Yorkshire for Lisbon by moving from the First Division to one of the world's most famous clubs for £1.2 million.

The transfer was set up yesterday by the former Liverpool manager Graeme Souness, who became Benfica coach two months ago.

Souness is likely to fund the deal by selling his club's outstanding player, the Portugal international Joao Pinto, to Deportivo La Coruna of Spain for £2 million.

Deane returned to United — where he started his career — from Leeds only last summer after spurning an opportunity to join Feyenoord.

Although the 29-year-old striker is believed to be earning about £20,000 a week at Bramall Lane, his contract expires in June when he can have a free transfer abroad under the Bosman ruling.

Souness switched to Deane after failing in an audacious attempt to sign Ian Wright from Arsenal 10 days ago. Deane will become the second English-based player to move to Benfica since Souness's appointment, following the Czech Republic midfielder Karel Poborsky who left Manchester United for £2 million three weeks ago.

Coventry will decide in the next 24 hours whether to accept Sheffield Wednesday's offer — believed to be around £1.5 million — for the England Under-21 defender Marcus Hall.

Hall, who played under Wednesday's manager Ron Atkinson during his reign at Coventry, has discussed personal terms but nothing has been finalised.

Atkinson can help fund any Hall deal with £1.2 million received from Bordeaux after Patrick Blondeau's return to France, the defender's wife having blocked a move to relegation-threatened Tottenham.

Blondeau's nightmare six months at Hillsborough ended after he signed for Bordeaux on a 3½-year contract.

The France defender could have stayed in the Premiership with Spurs. He recently had talks with them, Spurs of a bigger package than Bordeaux. But the Bordeaux president Jean-Louis Triard said: "His wife was not happy in England. She has never really settled and told Patrick she wanted to go back to France."

The deal represents a £800,000 loss on a player who cost £1.8 million from the French champions Monaco only six months ago. Blondeau made only six appearances for Wednesday.

Stoke's manager Chic Bates last night received a vote of confidence after a second emergency board meeting to discuss his future. Earlier he spoke at length with the directors. But doubts must remain about his management. Several hundred fans called for his dismissal after Stoke's 7-0 home defeat by Birmingham last weekend, and on Tuesday they were knocked out of the FA Cup, losing 3-1 at West Bromwich.

Bates is believed to be around £1.5 million — for the England Under-21 defender Marcus Hall, dismissed by Bradford City last week.

Brown resigned to Ferguson loss

Patrick Glenn

CRAIG BROWN, the Scotland manager, confirmed yesterday that not even his worrying shortage of strikers will allow Everton's Duncan Ferguson to return to the World Cup squad.

Ferguson withdrew his services last autumn, intimating that he no longer wished to be considered for the national team.

Brown attended the draw for Euro 2000 this weekend, comfortable in the knowledge that he will still be in the job until after that championship. His current agreement expires this summer but the Scottish Football Association president Jack McGinn has already indicated to him that he will be asked to continue.

Unlike some countries, Scotland do not consider a manager's technical director, and managing the national team is a branch line. "There is no rush with these things," Brown said. "My last contract was only six weeks short of expiry when the committee asked me to renew it. We were in America, preparing for Euro 96."

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Replay: Sheffield Wednesday 0, Watford 0 (at 90min)

Di Canio takes early bath

David Hopps

PAOLO Di Canio was not a bad judge when he masterminded his own sending-off in a nondescript fourth-round replay at Boleyn ground last night. Banished to the dressing room, Di Canio was at least spared the spectacle of an error-strewn contest which slipped into extra-time still goalless.

The Italian's dismissal for dissent in the 25th minute was a masterpiece of melodrama, an infantile display of petulant arm-waving that deserves the offer of a contract with an international dancing school.

His failure to win a throw deep in Watford's half caused him to gesture outlandishly at a linesman. When the referee Gary Williams intervened to brandish a yellow card, Di Canio switched to a new dancing partner and an intemper-

ate routine that merited castanets in either hand.

Willard predictably pocketed the yellow card in favour of the red, whereupon Di Canio seemed to fan the flames of an imaginary Sambuca. He bounced off to the bench past his manager Ron Atkinson and needed several minutes' persuasion from Wednesday staff before comprehending Atkinson's gesture that he might like to return to the dressing room.

With Benito Carbone suspended, much onus rested on Andy Booth, whose pace remains restricted after a cartilage operation but who looks like he would take to the dance floor only after half-a-dozen pints.

Wednesday could hardly have begun more sluggishly, but Di Canio's departure, quickly followed by a Watford breakaway which almost brought a goal for Paul Robinson, spurred them into life.

Twice in a second they struck the woodwork. Graham Hyde's drive rebounding from the post for Booth to slam the ball against the bar.

That Willard was booed on and off the field at half-time merely confirmed the innate partiality of the average football crowd. Wednesday had more than enough shortcomings without worrying about him.

Fortunately for them, Watford were also creating little more than a fuss. Kevin Pressman, in Wednesday's goal, would have been well aware of the chilliness of the night, the second half reaching its midpoint before Giffon Noel-Williams brought him to his knees for his first save.

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Third round: Darlington 0, Wolverhampton Wanderers 4

Wolves sharpen their teeth

Derek Potter

WHATEVER progress Wolves make in the FA Cup, they will look back and shudder at their great escape last night against a team that cost nothing and languishes sixth from bottom place in the Third Division.

Darlington played the football: Wolves scored the goals, with Darren Ferguson and Mimi Paalalainen putting a gloss on the score with scores in injury-time. That was the outline of the postponed third-round tie that sees Wolves visit Charlton in the fourth round.

Despite the injustice of the first half, the Quakers would not be shaken into abandoning their quality. Wolves' quality, almost made it with a 30-yard drive, Mike Stowell

saved with his extended legs from Glenn Naylor and Darren Roberts held his head after failing to keep it, missing an open target after his electrifying switch with Ganga.

It was the prelude to another Wolves goal. Paalalainen was able to prod the ball into an unguarded net for his first goal after the goalkeeper David Preece under no pressure, fumbled a simple headed back-pass from Andy Crosby.

Wolves would have been proud to have started with the passion and quality produced by Darlington in a first half they often dominated.

Stowell spilled an early shot by Mario Dorner and amid a barrage of corner kicks, Mark Atkins cleared a header by the Austrian striker off the goal-line. It was a storybook start with a vicious backlash in the

18th minute. The Darlington defence, so composed until then, suddenly became exposed as Dougie Freedman curled a 20-yard shot into the top corner to give Wolves a flatterer lead.

Darlington did not have the luck to go with their quality which should have seen Michael Oliver score a 26-minute equaliser.

Roberts, a former Wolves player, made the running and the opening only to see Oliver's shot hit the base of an upright from 15 yards range with the Wolves defence skilfully unhinged and failing to answer a vital question.

Darlington (3-4-2): Preece; Shaw, De Vos, Crosby (Bramwell, Smith), Bernard (Robinson, Tye); Ganga, Anderson, Naylor (Hartley, Tye); Roberts, Ganga, Tye. Wolves (3-5-2): Stowell; Richards, Curtis, Robinson; Mullen, Sadler, Ferguson, Atkins; Froggatt, Goodman (Paalalainen, 27). Referee: G. Bain (Boscoe).

Rugby League

World Nines lost for the want of time

THE World Nines, scheduled for Australia or New Zealand next month, have been scrapped because there is not enough time to organise them.

Maurice Lindsay, the new Super League managing director who still holds the position of International Board chairman, said: "Several countries have been pressing me for a decision as we are getting close to the proposed date. I received final confirmation today that the competition will not take place."

Lindsay also said the proposed mid-season tournament between Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand was likely to be put off. The Rugby Football League is drawing up plans to host a European competition then, in July.

Leigh are discussing a possible tie-up with St Helens in the way that Bradford, Hull and Leeds have forged links with Dewsbury, Wakefield Trinity and Bramley.

The former Great Britain scrum-half Deryck Fox has been granted a free transfer by Featherstone for outstanding service to the club.

Sport in brief

Motor Racing

The Portuguese Grand Prix, scheduled for October 11, has been officially dropped from this year's world championship because safety improvements at the Estoril circuit have not been completed, writes Alan Henry. This opens the way for the South African Grand Prix to be restored to the calendar for the first time since 1983.

The sport's governing body, the FIA, has also given the Belgian Grand Prix organisers until February 15 to resolve their problems over a possible tobacco sponsorship ban in 1999 which threatens this year's race.

Figure Skating

Three Russian men, Alexei Yagudin, 17, from St Petersburg, Alexander Abt, 21, from Moscow and Evgeny Plushenko, 15, from St Petersburg, were outstanding at the men's competition of the European championships opened in Milan, writes Molly Smith. All three had clean programmes and completed the highly difficult triple axel/triple toe-loop combination jump.

Steven Cousins, Britain's 25-year-old national champion from Deside, is in seventh position going into today's free programme.

Results

Football

FA CUP
Third round
Sheffield Wednesday 0, Watford 0 (at 90min)
Sheffield Wednesday 0, Watford 0 (at 90min)
Sheffield Wednesday 0, Watford 0 (at 90min)

Third-round replays
Aston Villa 11-1 Portsmouth 0
Aston Villa 11-1 Portsmouth 0
Aston Villa 11-1 Portsmouth 0

FA CUP
Replay fourth-round draw
Sheffield Wednesday 0, Watford 0 (at 90min)
Sheffield Wednesday 0, Watford 0 (at 90min)
Sheffield Wednesday 0, Watford 0 (at 90min)

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
Fourth Division
Partick Thistle 1, Inverness CT 1
Partick Thistle 1, Inverness CT 1
Partick Thistle 1, Inverness CT 1

RUGBY LEAGUE
First Division
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10

RUGBY LEAGUE
First Division
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10

RUGBY LEAGUE
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RUGBY LEAGUE
First Division
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10
Leeds 10, Wakefield 10

100th Anniversary
1. L. Maurer (US) 1,011.16; 2. M. Maurer (Japan) 1,011.16; 3. M. Maurer (Japan) 1,011.16; 4. M. Maurer (Japan) 1,011.16; 5. M. Maurer (Japan) 1,011.16

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Dalglish considers £3m move for West Brom winger Kilbane

Peter White

NEWCASTLE's manager Kenny Dalglish is considering a move for West Bromwich Albion's £3 million-rated winger Kevin Kilbane.

Dalglish was at The Hawthorns on Tuesday to watch the 20-year-old and saw him cap an impressive performance by scoring the final goal in Albion's 3-1 FA Cup victory over Stoke.

The Republic of Ireland international was bought from Preston last summer for £1.25 million by Ray Harford, who has since become manager at Queens Park Rangers and would be interested in taking the player to Loftus Road if he became available.

However, Albion's new manager Denis Smith said he was reluctant to sell. "I've only been here since Christmas and I am still assessing all the players so I don't really want anyone to leave just yet," he said. "Kilbane is a very exciting player and I am sure he, like his colleagues, would love to play in the Premiership."

Celtic's unsettled striker Andreas Thom yesterday completed a £100,000 move

to the struggling Bundesliga club Hertha Berlin. The 33-year-old former German international joined Celtic from Bayer Leverkusen for a then club-record £2.2 million in August 1995 but has been a peripheral figure this season.

He has been troubled by injury and loss of form and would have become a free agent this summer when his contract at Parkhead expires. "When I was allowed to play I did quite well and scored goals, even as an attacking midfielder," he said. "But usually I had to sit on the bench for tactical reasons. I've never regretted my transfer to Glasgow."

Thom... move to Germany

Thom... move to Germany

Thom... move to Germany

Thom... move to Germany

Thom... move to Germany

Thom... move to Germany

Thom... move to Germany

Rugby Union

Woodward's kind word in Yates' ear

Robert Kitson

THE England coach Clive Woodward made a manful attempt to ease the strain on Bath's suspended prop Kevin Yates yesterday. As the national squad met for a "theoretical day" at Bisham Abbey without the pivotal figure in the Simon Fenn ear-biting whodunnit, the 25-year-old Yates discovered who his friends are.

Woodward said Yates had rung him shortly after being told of his suspension by Bath pending an inquiry into the allegation that he bit a chunk out of the London Scottish flanker's ear last weekend, and had maintained his innocence throughout. They agreed that the prop's presence at Bisham might prove awkward but Woodward is leaping to few conclusions on the basis of the video sent to the Rugby Football Union by London Scottish.

"He rang me and said: 'I need to tell you I didn't do it,'" said Woodward, who coached Yates at Bath before

taking the England job. "If a guy you know well reiterates he is innocent, you have to go with that. He's not the sort of guy I'd expect to be involved in this sort of incident."

"I told him he's in the squad until he's proven guilty, although any player found guilty of biting deserves to be banned for a significant period."

Woodward's sympathy extended to Bath. "They're desperate to sort it out; it's not as easy or black and white as it might first appear."

and another England prop, Victor Uboagu, originally cited with Yates and Federico Mendez by London Scottish. "The thing that staggered me was citing Victor. Mud does stick for people who don't understand rugby. You might as well have cited Andy Robinson or the crowd as Victor. They were just as close."

This ongoing saga of Pecks, Lies and Videotape seems destined to spill over into the courts and Uboagu is already taking advice, pointing out that he has never been sent off in 20 years playing. "It is defamatory to me," he said, referring to the Scottish citing.

"The video shows I could not possibly have been involved."

Scottish say they have yet to receive Bath's copy of the match video or statements from certain key players, as requested on Tuesday.

Yates and Fenn, scarcely household rugby names this time last week, found themselves the subject of assorted radio phone-ins, with packs of former players willing to assert that the modern player is for nancy boys. "I don't know a rugby forward who's never broken the law," the former Vales and Lions hooker Bobby Windsor informed BBC Radio 5 Live listeners. "In the old days you just shut your mouth and next game you plonked the guy who did it."

In this professional era, of course, that thing flying past your head might easily be a lawsuit. Fenn, who needed 25 stitches in his ripped ear, will be well advised to leave Windsor on the bench when it comes to picking his legal team.

Jeremy Guscott may be back in Bath colours this weekend and has not given up hope of selection in England's team to face France in Paris in the opening round of the Five Nations Championship on February 7. The Lions centre, plagued with arm and back injuries for six months, has reported no ill-effects since resuming contact training on Monday and is set to be in the Bath squad at Newcastle on Sunday.

"The session on Monday went as well as I expected and hoped. The next day you wake up and you wonder whether you're going to get a few aches and pains but to date it's been good," he revealed.

"I'd like to think I'll definitely play again before the end of the month, and Sunday's a possibility. All I'm lacking is match fitness."

Sitting alongside Lawrence Dallaglio and Woodward at Bisham Abbey yesterday, Guscott may have felt he had been away far longer. In his absence England have appointed a new coach and captain, played four home Tests and practically reinvented their style of play.

Woodward confirmed that Guscott was very much a "live candidate" for the France game, although he will miss out on the other scheduled Bisham training session on January 28 when Bath's England contingent are being allowed to concentrate on the European Cup final.



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Many a true word... a Bath promotional poster

Lawyers line up for field day from pitch battles

LAWYERS continue to profit from professional rugby union, writes Paul Rees. As Bath look into the ear-biting incident which marred their Tetley's Bitter Cup tie against London Scottish on Saturday, threats of legal action echo their way along the M4.

After the injury to their flanker Simon Fenn, Scottish cited the Bath front row of Kevin Yates, Federico Mendez and Victor Uboagu. At

least two of them had to be innocent and all three have denied being the culprit.

Uboagu said he was considering taking action against Scottish for defamation of character. "I was horrified that London Scottish cited me," he said. "I am delighted Federico and I have been exonerated but I have had to take legal advice and I will now consider whether to take the matter further. I have a business to run and my name is my passport."

Mendez, the Argentine hooker, has also denied biting Fenn, but whereas Scottish have removed Uboagu's name from their citation to the Rugby Football Union, Mendez's remains.

Yates, who has been suspended on full pay by Bath, has vowed to clear his name and is consulting a solicitor. The legal system is adversarial, though, and where there is one opinion, a contrary one is not far away.

Who could sue for what

Sam Simon

Victor Uboagu

I think Uboagu has a very strong case. London Scottish cited three players knowing that at least two of them could not be guilty. They themselves should have taken legal advice before naming names. If I was advising Uboagu, I would tell him to sue for substantial damages. He is a businessman and his reputation is very important to him.

Federico Mendez

He may not be a businessman like Uboagu but he is an international whose contract with Bath expires in six months and who may want to pursue his career abroad. An unfounded reputation as an ear-biter, and let's face it this is an abhorrent incident which should earn the perpetrator a life ban, could harm his chances of finding another club.

Kevin Yates

Until facts have been established it is wrong to assume anyone's guilt. Yates should not have been suspended by Bath unless they had evidence which they are not prepared to divulge, though that would not appear to be the case. The writer is the president of Pontypridd, a member of the Welsh Rugby Union's general committee and a Cardiff solicitor.

Steady club form earns flanker a call-up for trial in Treviso

Holmes wins first cap as Scotland make eight changes for Five Nations warm-up

SIMON HOLMES, the London Scottish flanker, will win his first full cap when Scotland play Italy in Treviso in a Five Nations warm-up on Saturday week.

The 31-year-old gets his chance after impressing on last summer's Scotland Development Squad tour of South Africa and edges out Ian Smith after consistent performances for Scottish this season.

His inclusion is one of eight changes, two positional, from the side humiliated 68-10 by South Africa last month.

Two Lions, Doddie Weir and Alan Tait, return after injury and their Newcastle team-mate Gary Armstrong gets the nod over Bath's Andy Nicol at scrum-half after being on the bench for the games against Australia and the Springboks.

Tait's return means Tony Stanger switches to the right wing, with Craig Joiner moving to the left and Derek Stark back on the bench.

George Graham is the fourth Newcastle player in the squad, picked ahead of David Rilton at loose-head prop, and a fifth, Peter Walton, is among the replacements.

Newcastle's director of rugby Rob Andrew, who agreed to release the five Falcons for the Scotland game, plans to fly them back from Italy afterwards for the Tetley's Bitter Cup tie at Worcester the next day.

Scotland's need for mobility in the back row moves Adam Roxburgh, concussed on his debut against Australia, to No. 8 in place of Eric Peters.

Two other uncapped players, Hawick's Cameron Murray and Dundee High's hooker Gavin Scott, also win places on the bench.

Meanwhile Philippe Saint-André, Gloucester's French international wing, is facing a further month on the sidelines with a thigh injury. The 29-year-old, recently omitted from France's pre-Five Nations training squad, has

been troubled by the injury for a month.

Gloucester's team manager John Fidler said: "He thought that this thing would be right by now, but it has not cleared up." The injury will give Brian Johnson an extended run in the Gloucester first team, starting with Sunday's Allied Dunbar Premiership One derby at Bristol.

Moseley have signed the Western Samoa prop Afa Leseu on a full-time contract until the end of the season. Leseu, 35, has won 20 caps for his country. He arrived in Birmingham yesterday and will be eligible to play in Moseley's game at Rotherham on Saturday.

SCOTLAND: Shepherd (Melrose); Stanger (Rugby); Tait (Newcastle); Chisholm (Melrose); Nicol (Gloucester); Armstrong (Northampton); Andrew (Newcastle); Walton (Newcastle); Weir (Newcastle); Murray (Dundee); Holmes (London Scottish); Scott (Dundee); Roxburgh (Newcastle); Peters (Newcastle); Fidler (Gloucester); Fenn (London Scottish).



Happier times... Gwyn Jones in action for Wales against Tonga in the month before his final game

JAMIE McDONALD

'I realised I couldn't move'

Gwyn Jones recalls his horrific neck injury while playing for Cardiff against Swansea

OVER the past four weeks I have looked back a few times at what happened. I remember following Robert Bowley in to try to secure the ball and ending up in a difficult position. I felt a rush from both sides, somebody behind and somebody in front. To be honest I just remember feeling a crunch in my neck.

I didn't immediately know how serious the situation was. When the bodies started falling on top of me I just thought I was trapped underneath the ruck; I thought that was why I couldn't move.

But then as the other players ran away I was left on my own. I quickly realised that I couldn't move. When I looked down and saw my arms there I couldn't really work it out; because I couldn't feel anything I wasn't sure they were mine. However, once I saw the strapping on my hand I realised they were my hands and then I knew it was a serious injury.

Being partially educated in medicine, I understand what has happened to a certain extent. However, it is a very specialist area and I just leave it very much to the doctors here in the Cardiff Royal Infirmary and the physiotherapists who have so much more expertise and experience.

There are times when it is difficult and there are times when you see some improvements and obviously when you feel more optimistic. However, at this stage nobody can accurately predict the future, and the uncertainty is part of it. Everyone told us it was going to be a slow process, but there has been progress.

I don't think I am being an impatient patient but I am eager and frustrated. I just want to get on with my recovery and to be doing as much as I possibly can.

The physiotherapy is very demanding physically. Mentally, it is difficult to co-ordinate and to concentrate on being specific in the movements. You have to try to centralise the movements again and it is hard work. I am very determined.

At this stage it is difficult for me to say how I am progressing because I don't know what to expect. I was told in the early days, when I had no movement at all and very little sensation, that it would be after the first three weeks or so that we would have a better indication of where my future lies.

I am told I am making good progress, and that is good news. In those early days I didn't know what was going to happen, and there is still a long way to go. However, four weeks after the operation I have

developed some movement in my arms and legs, even if it is not that co-ordinated. I am hopeful of a full recovery and everyone is trying to support me in that aim. The doctors have certainly not ruled out a full recovery, it's just that at the moment there is some uncertainty.

People ask me if it was a difficult decision to announce that I would never play rugby again. It wasn't. I have had quite a few bad injuries in the past and I have always fought my way back from them. However, the severity of this injury gave me no other choice. I had full support from my family in making that decision.

In fact, the support from everywhere has been fantastic from the first week I was in hospital. I am very touched by those messages of good luck from all four corners of the globe.

Gwyn Jones was talking to the Western Mail's chief rugby union writer Graham Clutton

Ireland have to accept the injury truth about Henderson

THE Wasps centre Rob Henderson is certainly out of the side.

Ireland are also concerned about the scrum-half Conor McQuinn, who aggravated an ankle injury in training this week, and Nick Poppell, who has a sore hamstring.

France are to reduce their elite championship from 20 to 16 clubs next season. The decision was reached after a day-long meeting between the

French Rugby Federation president Bernard Lapasset and the president of the Elite Rugby National Commission, Seraphin Berthier.

The move, demanded by the international players and national coaching set-up, is a threat to the European champions Brive, who are one place above the relegation zone.

Neil Jenkins, the Wales and Lions goalkicker and Ponty-

pridd captain, had talks with Bath yesterday about a possible move there after his club gave permission. Jenkins, 28, has been at Pontypridd for 12 years and has turned down several offers to move.

Bath raided the Welsh game five months ago and signed Iwan Evans for £75,000. They would need to put a six-figure offer on the table for Jenkins. Wales's record points scorer with more than 50 caps.

Cricket

Walsh gives support to Lara

David Field

CCOURTNEY WALSH continued his Test career and pledged his full support to the new West Indies captain Brian Lara.

There is still a little life left in the old dog," said the 35-year-old fast bowler as he ended a week of speculation when he announced he would play under his Trinidadian successor.

The pair were said to be at odds over comments Lara made before West Indies' tour of Pakistan last November. Lara said he was disappointed not to have been appointed captain for the series, which West Indies lost 3-0. Then, when Lara was made captain for the five-Test series against England which starts in Kingston on Thursday week, Walsh said he was not sure he could play under him.

Walsh, who made his international debut against Australia in 1988, said his 10 wickets in Jamaica's match against Barbados were enough to convince him he still had an appetite for the game at top level.

"I can still compete at the highest level, which is the reason that spurred me on," he said, adding that his motivation to continue had nothing to do with the 23 wickets he needs to equal Malcolm Marshall's West Indies record of 376 or that he is only four caps short of his century.

"I was disappointed to lose the captaincy but a lot of people in the Caribbean sent me faxes and letters asking me to play on."

"We have a new captain and I'd like to give him as much support as possible — and I think he's going to need it in Jamaica and through the series as well."

"There will not be any controversy in our relationship. I want to squash speculation that there is a lot of rivalry and animosity between us. I think I'll be a better person for this. The game is bigger than anybody. I think I've taken a step in the right direction and now I'm looking to the future."

The England captain Mike Atherton said Walsh would make England's task more difficult in the Caribbean. However, Walsh will not play for Jamaica against England in Montego Bay tomorrow, and nor will his opening partner Franklyn Rose, who took five wickets in the second innings against Barbados but strained a shoulder.

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Gough hopes to make comeback in third Test

DARREN GOUGH, the Yorkshire fast bowler, hopes to be fit for England's third Test against West Indies in Guyana, which begins at the end of next month.

The 27-year-old, who withdrew from the tour party on New Year's Eve because of a persistent hamstring injury, has responded well to treatment and plans to join his team-mates in the Caribbean at the first opportunity.

"The specialists have now isolated the problem area and have adjusted my treatment slightly and the hope is that I will complete my recovery in about six weeks," he said.

England's captain Mike Atherton has said he hopes Gough will join the tour early next month, but the Yorkshireman was more circumspect. "I don't want to set myself specific targets because if I don't make them it will be a let-down," he said.

Shane Warne made a winning start as Australia's one-day captain yesterday, leading an inexperienced team to a 131-run victory over New Zealand in their World Series match in Sydney.

Australia, who appointed Warne captain in place of the injured Steve Waugh, recovered from 38 for three to 250 all out. Ricky Ponting, one of only three Test regulars in the side, top-scored with 89.

In reply New Zealand lost their last nine wickets for 68 and succumbed with 14 overs remaining. The win took Australia to the final of the triangular tournament, where they will play South Africa.

Sachin Tendulkar scored 95 off 78 balls to help India to an eight-wicket win over Pakistan in the first of their three Independence Cup matches in Dhaka. His 168-run opening partnership with Sourav Ganguly put India in command after Pakistan had made 212 for eight. Mohammad Azharuddin, who replaced Tendulkar as captain before the tournament, ensured victory with 30 not out.

Boxing

Hide is warned

John Rawling

THE WBO heavyweight champion Herbie Hide escaped with a warning when he was called before the British Boxing Board of Control to explain his behaviour outside the ring over recent months.

Hide has resulted in three court cases. Hide, 26, was fined £100 and given 60 hours' community service after assaulting a police woman and her male colleague. Further charges of assault and motorist offences have yet to be answered.

The WBO super-middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe will defend his title in Cardiff on January 24 against the 25-year-old Croatian southpaw Branko Gojot because the United States-based Syrian Tarik Salmaoui pulled out.

The American promoter Matt Tinley warned Wayne

McCullough to honour the five-year contract he claims the Irishman signed last year, or not fight again.

McCullough's title challenge on February 28 to the WBC super-bantamweight champion Eric Morales of Mexico has been called off. Tinley blames McCullough's manager-wife Cheryl. "Does Jerry Hall manage the Rolling Stones?" he asked.



Hide... three court cases

Swimming

Hickman slips up

BITAIN suffered a frustrating day at the world championships in Perth yesterday with line performances but no medals, and everything overshadowed by the drugs controversy.

The world short-course champion James Hickman was on course for the 200 metres butterfly bronze at the halfway point but slipped to fifth, 0.05sec outside his British record, with Liverpool's Stephen Parry sixth in his first world final. "Perhaps that third 50m is something I have got to work on," said Hickman. "I've got to try and hang in there."

Scott Goodman, the Olympic bronze medallist and world No. 1, had been disqualified for delaying the race after he lost his balance and fell into the water from the starting block. The Australian threw a chair across the pool side as he snatched up his clothes and walked away.

The Ukrainian Denys Sylantyev snatched gold in the

final metres from France's European champion Franck Esposito, with the United States' Tom Malchow, the Olympic silver medallist, in third.

The four-times Olympic champion Alexander Popov, who was badly injured in a knife attack in a Moscow street 15 months ago, lowered his own 100m freestyle championship record to 46.93sec to retain his title. Michael Klim, who trains with the Russian at the Institute of Sport in Canberra and who was chasing seven golds this week, was second in 48.30.

Britain's 4x200 metres relay squad — Sue Rolph, Claire Huddart, the 15-year-old Melanie Marshall and Karen Pickering — improved on the national record of 3:45.30, set at last year's event, by 0.22sec. Newcastle's Rolph, sixth in the individual final, put Britain third after the first changeover and said: "It's great to get a record, it shows we are improving."

SportsGuardian

Asprilla back to Parma for £5m

Paddy Agnew in Rome and Michael Walker

FAUSTINO ASPRILLA is expected to sign for his old Serie A club, Parma, for a fee of £5 million within the next 48 hours.

Italian sources expect the Colombian striker to fly into northern Italy today and to complete a medical at the club's ground in the afternoon.

The news will do nothing to improve the mood of Newcastle United fans, who are far from pleased at how their club has slipped from contention for honours since Kenny Dalglish arrived as manager one year ago.

Their problems this season began when Alan Shearer was injured during a friendly at Goodison Park in August, days after Les Ferdinand was sold to Tottenham.

Ever since, Newcastle have suffered from an inability to score goals, with Ian Rush, Jon Dahl Tomasson and John Barnes failing to provide sufficient firepower.

Even if Shearer returns on Saturday against Bolton, he may struggle to supply the penetration so sorely needed — particularly with the gifted Colombian gone.

The 28-year-old Asprilla, who moved to Newcastle from Parma in February 1996, will rejoin the club which first launched him in European soccer. Asprilla moved to Parma in the summer of 1992 from Nacional Medellin of Colombia for \$2.7 million.

Asprilla's return is partly prompted by a Parma crisis sparked by a 5-2 defeat by Sampdoria on Sunday but which, in reality, began with the club's pre-Christmas elimination from the Champions League. Parma, who are currently fourth in Serie A, 10 points behind the leaders Internazionale, were eliminated from the Champions League group won by the reigning European Champions, the German side Borussia Dortmund.

Asprilla's arrival at Parma is expected to prompt further player movement at the club with their Argentinian striker Hernan Crespo perhaps moving on to make room for the Colombian.

The Italian transfer market closes on January 30, prompting a number of top clubs to make last-minute hasty transfers to strengthen squads for a Serie A season which has yet to reach the halfway mark.

Yesterday on Tyneside Dalglish walked out of a Newcastle press conference, lambasting local newspapermen, barely 12 minutes into a review of his first year in charge at St James Park.

Instead of the manager taking a reflective look back and an optimistic look forward, there was a dour half-defence of the past 12 months, reinforcing the image of a man peeved at his perceived media enemies.

"The ones with pens and paper are not important; they don't win you matches," he said. "Undoubtedly and unfortunately, I've been writing down I've never even met the boy."

Newcastle target Kibbano, page 14

Asprilla... on the move

Asprilla... on the move

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Asprilla... on the move

Asprilla... on the move

FA Cup, third-round replay



Spread your wings... Port Vale's Allen Tankard evades the challenge of Ray Parlour at Vale Park last night

PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS KINNAIRD

Port Vale 0, Arsenal 0 (at 90min)

Vale dig their heels in

David Lacey sees Arsenal frustrated by First Division side

THE quality that Dennis Bergkamp brings to Arsenal's football last night promised them a fourth-round encounter with Middlesbrough and Paul Merson, but Port Vale's resistance at Vale Park denied them a comfortable victory in an eventful replay.

Arsenal must have wondered what they were doing in the Potteries last night, taken to a replay by a First Division side engaged in a dangerous flirtation with relegation after seven successive league defeats, their worst run in 41 years. Then again, Port Vale had knocked Terry Venables' Tottenham team out of the Cup 10 years ago after winning only one league fixture in 14.

Upsets at Arsenal's expense are part of FA Cup folklore, with York, Wrexham and Millwall among their more recent conquerors. Last

night, however, the circumstances still favoured Arsène Wenger's side.

Since being held to a 0-0 draw by Port Vale at Highbury Arsenal had recovered something of their buoyant autumn form, winning a Coca-Cola Cup quarter-final at West Ham before beating Leeds. Marc Overmars, moreover, was looking more like his old Ajax self, with three goals in those two games.

Certainly Vale Park's big pitch was admirably suited to players with the pace and technique of Overmars and Bergkamp, even though the normally smooth surface cut up badly after two days' rain.

Port Vale had Tony Naylor playing as a lone striker supported by a five-man midfield, tactics which had frustrated Arsenal in the first encounter, but within 10 minutes Wayne Corden led to nod a header from Ray Parlour off the goal-line.

Nevertheless Port Vale's neat and well-organised passing game gnawed at Premier-ship nerves from the outset. With Corden and Gareth Ainsworth giving them consistent width, Arsenal found it difficult to avoid becoming stretched at the back.

Port Vale's neat passing game gnawed at Premier-ship nerves from the outset

Again Port Vale had correctly identified Vieira's long strides forward as a source of danger and Stewart Talbot wasted little time tracking the Frenchman down. But when Vieira sent Bergkamp through a gap after 19 minutes, Talbot's foul conceded a free-kick but Paul Muschel-

white was equal to Bergkamp's swerving, dipping strike.

An excellent long pass from Talbot sent Ainsworth sprinting past Nigel Winterburn on the right and although the winger's centre was overhit the moment caused a flutter in Arsenal hearts. Yet Wenger's attack regularly achieved penetration, with Muschelwhite kept busier than David Seaman. If Port Vale fell behind they would surely struggle to save the tie.

In fact they almost conceded a goal on the half-hour. Port Vale's well-populated midfield might have been a man's land as Parlour gathered the ball near the halfway line and surged through on his own before driving in a shot which Muschelwhite turned around a post with difficulty.

Then Port Vale suffered some of those moments which often lead to a litany of might-have-beens. Nine minutes before half-time Ainsworth found Andy Hill with a lob past Winterburn and the right-back sidestepped Steve

Bould before passing to Naylor, who had only Seaman barring the way. Lee Dixon lunged across desperately and might have been partly responsible for Naylor shooting wide, but it was a bad miss.

Vale should have been ahead by the interval. As the first half ended, Corden crossed to the far post where Ainsworth was unmarked but lifted his volley into the stand.

Immediately Bergkamp provided another reminder of how costly these misses might prove, meeting a square pass from Overmars with a superb shot which dipped over the Port Vale bar.

The second half began with Bergkamp sending Overmars in for a hard-driven low cross which carried too much pace for Ian Wright to reach it, but the ease with which the Dutch pair outmanoeuvred the defence was ominous for First Division hopes.

Port Vale (4-4-1): Muschelwhite; Hill, Seidera, Aspin, Tankard; Ainsworth, Boga, Porter, Talbot, Corden; Naylor. Arsenal (4-4-2): Seaman; Dixon, Bould, Winterburn, Parlour, Vieira, Hughes, Overmars; Bergkamp, Wright. Referee: N Barry (Southampton).

Nothing now but to stick to the soccer and wonder



Frank Keating

IF ONLY he had stuck to the soccer. As a coach Terry Venables was both visionary and pragmatic; he was suitably and professionally cautious. He was one of the lads, yet very much the boss. At public relations he was terrific. Generally, and crucially, he was a lucky manager but one vulnerable also to awe, some dollops of bad luck. He possesses a full-beam million-dollar smile and also a rueful penny-halfpenny one of the little boy found out.

If only he had stuck to the soccer. When he focused on his true vocation he was original, assured and thoroughly convincing. If only he had stuck to the soccer he might well have been the whole game's most genuinely influential figure at this year's upcoming World Cup. Instead he will be snarling somewhere in a TV studio dungeon.

Even as his Portsmouth misadventure was abating him, he was a million miles away and only 20 minutes from steering Australia — Australia! — into the World Cup finals. If only he had stuck to the soccer he would doubtless have performed that minor miracle.

But he never could stick to the soccer. In between there was always something else: crooning with the Joe Loss band; books with Gordon Williams (Sammy Small, a Runyonesque cockney novel, and They Used to Play on Grass); the Hassell TV series; and the audaciously typical Thingummywigs, which were hats with a wig attached ("blonde, brunette, or even ginger, dahlia"), so that women could hide their curls when venturing outdoors.

Nothing ever quite caught on to make him fortunate, certainly not when he took on the big-money muscle at those two types of clubs prefaced by "night" and "football".

If only he had stuck to the soccer he would have been Arsenal's manager as early as 1976 (he turned it down to stay at Crystal Palace) and again after he had won the Spanish title with Barcelona (his first marriage was breaking up "and it's not the time to be back home in London although, by God, I do miss the sausages").

If he had stuck to the soccer he would surely have succeeded Bobby Robson as England's manager but the smoke was beginning to circle from the City and the FA chairman Bert Millichip, announcing a safe and ordinary shortlist of Graham Taylor, Joe Royle

and Howard Kendall, said disingenuously at the time: "Venables would have been hot favourite but he has this funny reputation." Taylor got the job and did he not stick to the soccer.

So Venables came late to the stewardship of England, then left it prematurely. If only he had stuck to the soccer. He says he was twice "just one penalty-kick away from immortality": with England in Euro 96 and in the European Cup final with Barcelona, beaten in a shoot-out by Steaua Bucharest 10 years earlier. Both times his mortality and his luck caught up with him, as it did yesterday.

He married his first wife Chris in 1966, the East London vicar wearing a clear-cut blue West Ham scarf and bobble hat. He was always on for a laugh was our Tel. For his second marriage in 1981, to Yvette (known universally as Toots), one could have launched a battleship in the free house bubbly-dotted out at Kensington High Street's Scribbles West.

HE WAS still a bachelor when we first met. In the summer of 1965 Tommy Docherty's Chelsea side of young Turks were on pre-season in Nice. I was making a film for ITV on the lately dead Somerset Maugham. We were in the same ritzy hotel and across the Promenade des Anglais was a ping-pong table on the private beach. There were ferocious matches all week: Osgood, Cooke, Hinton, Hollins and Keating. But Venables was always first to 21.

Terry was 22 and younger than most of them. He was not only team captain but already had the aura of Godfather about him. At night, over drinks, soccer, gossip and the finesse of tactics engaged the company in memorable discussion and it always ended with the manager, an enthusiastic, insecure Scot, and his quick-witted cockney captain at glorious debating loggerheads.

When one cried "enough" and finally hooked himself off to bed, the other stayed for further nightcaps and to be rather with the other. It could not last. Nor did it. Within a year both had left Chelsea: as John Hollins put it at the time "whatever the subject, Terry's sharpness was matching the Doc's crack for crack, barb for barb, and the Doc understandably felt threatened". What a team that could have been, if only Venables had stuck to the soccer.

I thought yesterday of that laughing laddo' week in the sun; also of that Virgin Airways ad that Terry made five years ago, where he was sitting in first-class porting over How to Succeed in Business; not to mention Frank Skinner's cruel good joke about renaming the night-club Wormwood Scribbles.

At least now he can stick to soccer — for seven years anyway.

China in new doping row

Duncan Mackay

CHINA may be kicked out of the world championships in Perth and made to hand back the medals they have won, after yesterday's announcement that four of their swimmers had tested positive for banned drugs.

The championships were already under a cloud after Yuan Yuan was caught smuggling human growth hormone into Australia last week. Now three other women, Wang Lina, Cai Huijue and Zhang Xi, and

one man, Wang Wei, have tested positive for the diuretic Triamterene after tests last Thursday — the morning after testers were refused access to China's swimmers because they lacked full accreditation.

The drug is used to flush substances such as anabolic steroids from a competitor's system.

Australia's head coach Don Talbot led calls for Fina, the world governing body, to enforce its rule that four positive tests from one nation lead to the whole team being suspended.

"This is systematic abuse," said Deryk Snelling, Britain's performance director. "China must be faced with suspension." Fina's secretary Gernar Werner said that action beyond suspending the swimmers for the mandatory four years had not yet been discussed.

Yuan was yesterday banned for four years and her coach for a record 15 years.

Paul Hayward reviews Dalglish's year at Newcastle in tomorrow's Guardian

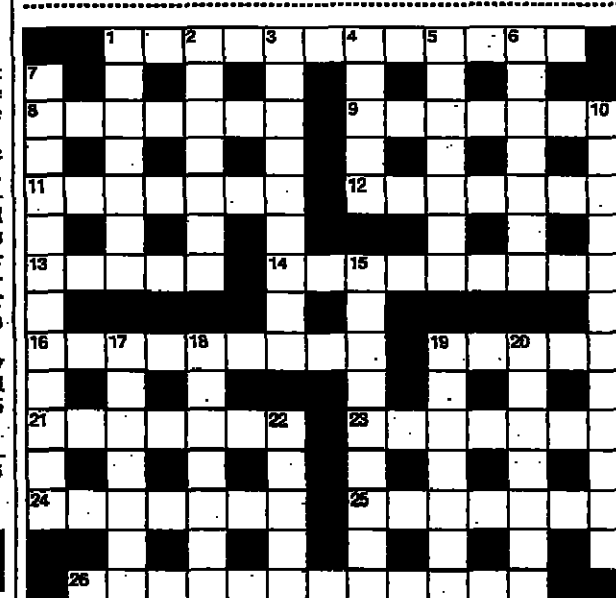
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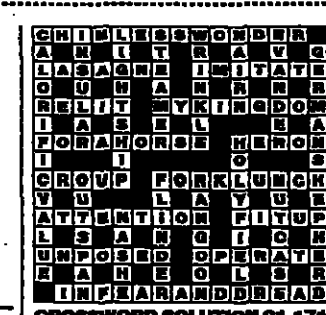
World championships, page 15

Guardian Crossword No 21,172



- Across**
- 1 Curate phoned at sea — approaching East London? (5,3,4)
 - 3 Setter twice entertained by swell on holiday... (4,3)
 - 5... deserved for service in the Mediterranean (7)
 - 11 A number — about half Europe — concerned with rotten meat (7)
 - 12 Dutch uncle (Semi?) always has to be at the centre (7)
 - 13 Bowel complaint found in French playwright (5)
 - 14 Buck slaughtered with great mess down under for food (5)
 - 16 Erection of fies right outside Troy (4,5)
 - 19 Officer in charge of fistulence (5)
- Down**
- 1 Uncombed reports in the spirit of the Guardian? (7)
 - 2 Out with pain so one might contrive (7)
 - 3 Burgess, say, takes in student as a diversionary play (5)
 - 4 Attia without the master race (5)
 - 5 Craft seen about Delphi? (7)
 - 6 Fluster getting a little bit of parsley or thyme (3,4)
 - 7 No seat on the moor (8,4)
 - 10 Sporting deer, resort to plan headquarters (5,6)
 - 15 File into old banger for economy (5,4)
 - 17 Diet to give 19 across after it, unfortunately? (7)
 - 18 A rim latch could be fatal (7)
 - 19 Horseman (7)
 - 20 One does it with intent to give offence (7)

Set by Gordius



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,171

22 One's within one's right to retain possession of one's bed (3-2)

Solution tomorrow

23 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0800 328 328. Call cost 5p per minute at all times. Service supplied by ATE

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ABPPT

"The next pope will have to come round to accepting married priests; it is essential to the survival of the Church. Once you have priests with a regular sex life and pregnancies for which they are responsible, things will change."

Who will succeed Pope John Paul?

G2 cover story